

Debate on Salvation

Guingrich-Thrasher Debate

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Representing Reformed Baptists

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Representing churches of Christ

Propositions

"The Bible teaches that faith in Jesus as the Son of God and water baptism in His name are two of the essential conditions in order for an alien sinner to obtain the forgiveness of past sins."

—*Thrasher affirms and Guingrich denies*

"The Bible teaches that faith is the only condition required for an alien sinner to obtain the forgiveness of sins."

—*Guingrich affirms and Thrasher denies*

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ISBN: 9798875822841

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INTRODUCTION

After extensive correspondence between Traever Guingrich and Thomas N. Thrasher regarding participation in a joint discussion on salvation, the following agreement was reached:

AGREEMENT FOR A WRITTEN DISCUSSION

1. The participants will be Traever Guingrich, pastor of Grace Chapel Reformed Baptist Church in Argo, Alabama, and Thomas N. Thrasher, evangelist with churches of Christ, living in Decatur, Alabama.

2. The propositions to be discussed are as follows:

A. "The Bible teaches that faith in Jesus as the Son of God and water baptism in His name are two of the essential conditions in order for an alien sinner to obtain the forgiveness of past sins." (Thrasher affirms and Guingrich denies).

B. "The Bible teaches that faith is the only condition required for an alien sinner to obtain the forgiveness of sins." (Guingrich affirms and Thrasher denies).

3. Each participant will write three articles on proposition A, each of which may be no longer than 2500 words¹, as counted by standard software (e.g., MS Word). Then proposition B will be discussed following the same procedure. The discussion of each proposition will involve alternating affirmative and negative

¹ The 2500 word limit was amended by mutual agreement to 3500 words for the final four speeches of the debate.

articles until a total of six articles have been submitted on that proposition. Consequently, the completed discussion will consist of 12 articles.

4. Mr. Thrasher agrees to bear the expense of publishing the completed discussion in book form and providing ten free copies of the book to Mr. Guingrich. In addition, Mr. Guingrich shall have the right to purchase as many copies of the book as he desires at the cost of publication. Mr. Guingrich shall also have the right to publish the discussion in book form with the same stipulations. If any portion of the discussion is published, all of it must be included, without additional argumentation incorporated.

5. The participants agree to conduct themselves honorably by the standards of God's word.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Traever Guingrich is a pastor at Grace Chapel Reformed Baptist Church in Argo, AL where he preaches expositionally through books of the Bible every Lord's Day. He and his wife Andrea have been married since 2004 and have 6 kids, who altogether love family worship and catechism. He attended Purdue University where he earned a B.S. in Machine Systems Engineering. After working as an engineer for Caterpillar for almost a decade, he attended Westminster Seminary California and International Reformed Baptist Seminary where he received his MDiv and Certificate of Reformed Baptist Studies, respectfully. He is a confessional Reformed Baptist fully subscribing to the 1689 London Baptist Confession. He has taught on many subjects with emphases in systematic theology, church history (particularly the Anabaptists), covenant theology, cessationism, apologetics, and textual criticism. He holds dearly to the doctrines of grace and the

five solas of the Reformation that proclaim salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.

Thomas N. Thrasher and his wife Jerretta have lived in Decatur, Alabama since their marriage more than 52 years ago. They have one son, Tommy, and two grandsons, Andrew and Luke. Mr. Thrasher began preaching the gospel in March 1966, while he was still in high school. Since that time, he has done evangelistic work in 22 U.S. states and Australia while also working as a mathematics teacher, school administrator, or college/university professor for 49 years, a career from which he retired in 2022. He has attended ten colleges and universities, earning six academic degrees, including three doctorates (Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership, 2007, Ph.D. in Christian Apologetics, 2015, and Th.D. in Theology, 2019). He has authored or co-authored more than 25 books. At the time of this book's publication, he had participated in 111 formal debates on a great variety of Bible-related topics, 20 of which have been published in book form. He is the author of a six-volume series of books entitled *The Encyclopedia of Religious Debates*, the most comprehensive record of religious debates ever published.



Traever Guingrich



Thomas N. Thrasher

THRASHER'S FIRST AFFIRMATIVE

It is a pleasure for me to meet my new friend, Traever Guingrich, in this discussion on the **conditions of salvation**. Our correspondence has been friendly and, I think, indicative of a desire to focus upon the truth of God's revealed word as presented in **the Bible**. Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are from the New King James Version.

The proposition I am affirming is: "The Bible teaches that faith in Jesus as the Son of God and water baptism in His name are two of the essential conditions in order for an alien sinner to obtain the forgiveness of past sins." I think this proposition requires little definition. Nevertheless, I will offer some comments regarding the issue between us. The proposition says, "The Bible teaches...." Although many people care little about what **the Bible teaches**, the Bible is, nevertheless, the basis for determining truth. The Bible clearly establishes that God requires people to meet **His conditions** in order to receive the benefits of the blood of Jesus Christ "in order ... to obtain the forgiveness of past sins" (that is, to be saved). Obedience to God's instructions (e.g., **faith** and **baptism**) demonstrates our acceptance of **God's grace** that He has **offered** to all lost people (*Titus 2:11*). God wants **all people** to be saved (*2 Peter 3:9*, "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.")

In *Matthew 7:21* the Lord said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will of My Father in heaven**." *Revelation 22:14* states, "Blessed *are* those who **do His commandments**, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city." *Hebrews 5:9* declares that Jesus "became the

author of eternal salvation **to all who obey Him.**” Many other Bible passages demonstrate the same point—**obedience to God’s commands is essential** for people to receive **eternal salvation** by the grace of God!

What are **God’s conditions**? My proposition affirms that two of those conditions that God specifies in His word are “**faith** in Jesus as the Son of God and water **baptism** in His name.” Notice that I **do not affirm** that these two are the **only** conditions! My proposition affirms that **faith** in Jesus and **baptism** in His name are two of the conditions. For example, the Bible also teaches that **repentance** (*2 Peter 3:9; Acts 17:30*) and oral **confession** of faith (*Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37*) are God-prescribed conditions! However, in affirming this proposition I will focus on the **two** items named in my proposition: **faith** and **baptism**.

With respect to the necessity of **faith** (belief in Jesus as the Son of God), I now cite two Bible verses, although many more could be given. Jesus Himself said in *John 8:24*, “... if you **do not believe** that I am *He*, you will **die in your sins**.” An alien sinner’s failure to believe in Jesus as the Son of God results in that person’s dying in his (or her) sins! Therefore, he (or she) will die **unforgiven** and, therefore, lost, not having met God’s condition of **faith**! Further proving that faith (or belief) is a condition for salvation, Jesus said in *Mark 16:16*, “... he who does **not believe** will be **condemned**.” Since Mr. Guingrich will later (in his affirmative) agree that **faith is required**, I see no need to present additional Bible passages on this point. If my friend denies that faith/belief in Jesus as the Son of God is essential to forgiveness, he will not only deny his proposition in the last half of this discussion, but (more significantly) he will be denying *John 8:24* and *Mark 16:16* spoken by our blessed Savior!

Advancing now to the second condition specified in the

proposition (“water **baptism** in His [Jesus’] name”), I will on this matter also **quote what God’s word says!** In “the Great Commission” (*Matthew 28:18-19*), Jesus told the apostles, “... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” In Mark’s account the Lord said, “... Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who **believes and is baptized** will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (*Mark 16:15-16*).

In *Luke 24:46-47* Jesus says, “... Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and **remission of sins** should be preached in His name to all nations, **beginning at Jerusalem**” (referring to the events of Pentecost, a few days later; cf. *Acts 1:8*). *Acts 2* records the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (*verses 1-4*), the audience of thousands who came together (*verses 5-13*), and the preaching of the gospel by Peter (*verses 14-36*). Peter’s lesson included an explanation that what had occurred was in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. The closing words of his quotation were: “... whoever **calls on** the name of the **LORD** shall be **saved**” (*Acts 2:21*). Having explained who the **Lord** is, many believed at Peter’s urging: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made **this Jesus**, whom you crucified, both **Lord** and Christ” (*verse 36*). Those believing Peter’s preaching of Jesus asked, “What shall we do?” (that is, to **call on** the name of the Lord so as to be **saved** (*verse 37*)). Peter answered these believers, “**Repent**, and let every one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins ...**” Approximately 3000 people yielded to this instruction and were **baptized** (*Acts 2:41*). Luke observed that such baptized believers “were being **saved**” (*Acts 2:47*). Consequently, it

is easily seen that **faith** in Jesus and **baptism** in His name are essential to forgiveness of an alien's sins (i.e., salvation/deliverance from past sins).

Later, the inspired writer Luke describes the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (*Acts 9, 22, 26*). In summary, when Ananias went to Saul in Damascus, he told him, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and **be baptized**, and **wash away your sins**, calling on the name of the Lord" (*Acts 22:16*). Why was Saul to be baptized after having complied with prerequisite conditions (including believing in Jesus)? The Bible says that baptism is necessary to "wash away your sins"! Of course, it was **not the water** that could wash sins away, but the precious **blood of Jesus** (*Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7*). However, God washes away our sins **when we obey Him** (*Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8*). Obedience to God includes **water baptism** in the name of the Lord (cf. *Acts 10:48; Acts 22:16*)!

When Philip went to Samaria and "preached Christ to them" (*Acts 8:5*), the response of many Samaritans was to **believe and be baptized** (*8:12*). That is precisely what Jesus had said people **must do to be saved** (*Mark 16:15-16*), that is, to have their past sins forgiven. Consequently, "the Bible teaches that **faith** in Jesus as the Son of God and **water baptism** in His name are two of the essential conditions in order for an alien sinner to obtain the forgiveness of past sins."

In *Acts 10-11* is Luke's report of the conversion of Gentiles in Caesarea. Cornelius sent for Peter to come to Caesarea to tell those Gentiles "words by which you and all your household **will be saved**" (*11:14*). *Acts 10:6* states: "He will tell you what you **must do**." Included in what Peter commanded them to do was "**be baptized**" (*10:48*)! People will not receive God's eternal blessings if they refuse to "do His commandments" (*Revelation 22:14*). Therefore, water baptism is essential to an alien's forgiveness.

While Paul and Silas were teaching God’s word in Philippi (Acts 16), the conversions of two groups are reported by Luke: the household of Lydia (16:13-15) and the household of the Jailer (16:20-34). In both cases we learn of their responses to the preaching of the gospel that led them to become **believers** (cf. *Romans 10:17*) and their being **baptized** (verses 15, 33). These are further examples of the goal of carrying out the “Great Commission” (cf. *Mark 16:15-16*). Those who **believe** and are **baptized** will be **saved** (have their past sins forgiven by God through the blood of Jesus)!

When the apostle Paul traveled to Corinth to preach the gospel “many of the Corinthians, hearing, **believed** and **were baptized**” (*Acts 18:8*). This description of their response to the gospel is precisely what Jesus said was to occur when He gave the “Great Commission” (*Mark 16:15-16*). Hearers of God’s truth are “saved” (delivered from their past sins) when they “**believe**” and are “**baptized.**”

The apostle Peter wrote, comparing what happened to those eight people who were spared the destruction of the flood in Noah’s day and the water baptism enjoined in the New Testament, that “there is also an antitype which **now saves us—baptism ...**” (*1 Peter 3:20-21*). Many people, including my friend Traever, often insist that baptism does **not** save us; that is, baptism is **not** one of God’s conditions for forgiveness. Who is right—my opponent or Peter? Despite my respect for my new friend Traever, I must choose Peter in this regard, since Peter was proclaiming God’s inspired word!

The apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ” (3:26-27). How did Paul

know that those he addressed were “sons [“children of God,” KJV]? Because he knew that they were **believers** who had been **baptized into Christ!** They had “**put on Christ**” by being “**baptized into Christ**”! Paul knew that it was only “**in Christ**” that they had access to “**every spiritual blessing**” (*Ephesians 1:3*). Those who are **not** “in Christ” receive **no spiritual blessings!** Certainly, forgiveness of sins is a “spiritual blessing”! However, obedience to the Lord’s command to be **baptized** is a condition for one to be “in Christ.”

In Paul’s letter to the saints in Rome, he reminded them: “Do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were **baptized into His death**? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should **walk in newness of life**” (*Romans 6:3-4*). Paul commented a little later, “God be thanked that *though* you **were** slaves of sin, yet you **obeyed** from the heart that form of doctrine [cf. 6:3-4—the “form” was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus] to which you were delivered. And having been **set free from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness” (*6:17-18*). **When** were they “set free from sin? When they “**obeyed**” (being “**baptized into Christ**” in the likeness of His death, burial, and resurrection).

The importance of understanding **when** God grants the blessings that He has promised is illustrated many times in the Bible. For example, Naaman the leper was told, “Go and **wash in the Jordan seven times**, and your flesh shall be restored to you, **and you shall be clean** (*2 Kings 5:1-10*). Initially, Naaman foolishly objected to doing what he was commanded to do. In fact, he proposed alternatives to doing what God (through Elisha’s messenger) told him, and he became angry and “went away in a rage” (*verse 12*). After one of his servants reasoned with him, he decided to **do what God commanded**. So Naaman “went down and

dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean” (*verse 14*). **WHEN** was Naaman cleansed of his leprosy? Was it **when** he first believed he could be cleansed? **When** he started toward the Jordan River? **When** he dipped in Jordan the **first time**? The **second** time? The **sixth** time? **No!** He was not cleansed until he **fully obeyed** what God had told him to do! Please read again what *verse 14* says!

Please observe that there was **no power in the water** of the Jordan River to cleanse Naaman’s (or anyone else’s) leprosy, just as there is **no power in the water** to remit sins when a sinner submits to God’s command to be baptized! Naaman’s **works** (going to the Jordan and dipping) did not cleanse him, nor does the action of our being immersed in water actually cleanse or wash away our sins. After his cleansing was accomplished, Naaman had no reason to conclude that he had “earned” cleansing from leprosy by his “works”! Likewise, we have no reason to attribute the forgiveness of our sins to whatever “works” we may have done, so that we deserve or “earn” forgiveness because of our “works.” Naaman was cleansed of his leprosy by God’s grace and power, but **God gave** that cleansing **WHEN** Naaman **fully obeyed** God’s instructions. Similarly, our sins are cleansed by the blood of Jesus **WHEN** we **fully obey** His instructions/conditions, and those conditions include our “**faith** in Jesus as the Son of God and **water baptism** in His name” (as God’s word clearly teaches in the Bible passages I’ve already quoted in this first speech). Warning! We will be condemned if we are guilty of “taking away” from God’s revealed will (cf. *Revelation 22:18-19*).

Writing to the Colossians, Paul stated: “You were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by **putting off the body of the sins of the flesh**, by the circumcision

of Christ, buried with Him in **baptism**, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven you all trespasses**" (*Colossians 2:11-13*). **When** were their sins put off? **When** they were "**buried with Him in baptism**"! In what way was this "putting off ... of the sins of the flesh" wrought? God put away their sins by "the circumcision made without hands." As fleshly circumcision involved a "cutting away" of flesh, similarly, without hands God circumcised ("cut away"; put off) the sins of the flesh (forgave them). It is vital that we recognize **when God does this!** The apostle explains that God does this through His "working" ("operation," KJV) without hands **when** we are "**buried with Him in baptism**" (clearly when a believer is baptized in water, as frequently indicated in the New Testament)!

In closing this first affirmative speech, I express appreciation to my new friend Traever for his participation in this gentlemanly discussion of the teaching of the Bible on the conditions of forgiveness.

GUINGRICH'S FIRST NEGATIVE

I am pleased that this issue is getting attention and it is my desire that our conversation be beneficial for convincing the readers of the truth. Thank you to Mr. Thrasher for reaching out and patiently working with me on a focused position for us each to affirm.

This subject is very much worthy of debate because it strikes at the core of historic fundamental biblical doctrines such as justification by faith alone, effectual grace, and the imputed righteousness of Christ. Denying these doctrines puts one firmly outside of the Christian camp along with the Roman Catholic Church and the Galatian heretics who were anathematized by the Apostle Paul.

Very simply put, baptism is a good work. In the Old Covenant circumcision was commended for covenant members (believers), and thus, to get circumcised was a work. In precisely the same way, in the New Covenant, baptism is commanded for covenant members (believers). Thus, in precisely the same way, baptism is work. To get baptized is an act of obedience for a Christian. Circumcision is a positive law (not a moral law) in the Old Covenant, and baptism is a positive law in the New Covenant. Positive laws are commands specific to a covenant, and members of said covenant are obligated to do them. In the Old Covenant, that meant God's people were supposed to do a specific work— get circumcised. In the New Covenant, that means that God's people are supposed to do a different specific work— get baptized.

In the Old Covenant, the people were under law. They were told to “do this and live” (Lev 18:5). In the New Covenant, the gospel tells us the law is done for us by Christ, and this through faith

in Him we will live. So we still seek to obey the law, but we do not do so in order to be saved or forgiven. Forgiveness is by the work of Christ alone. Not by our addition of the obedience of works. Works are what we do to prove or show we have genuine faith. They are not done to get saved or forgiven.

So I have no problem saying that a refusal to be baptized or to obey Christ's commands is indicative of a non-Christian. Even if such a person calls themselves a Christian, we who know the true Christ know such a man to be a liar. Those that love Christ obey His commandments (John 14:23-24, 1 John 5:2). But as John said in his first epistle, obeying His commandments are the way that we know someone loves God (1 John 5:1-5). Obeying God does not save us; it proves we are saved. It is the fruit of the Spirit. Holiness is the result of grace. So no work of the law justifies us, but justified people obey the law. Any claim that a work must be performed in order to be saved is deviating from the gospel of grace. Therefore, by insisting that obedience in baptism is necessary for forgiveness, Mr. Thrasher put us back under the law and denies the true gospel.

Note well, this does not mean that works can be ignored. It means that Christians do works because God saved them. He saved us for good works (Eph 2:10), but not by good works being added to our faith. We are justified by faith alone; apart from works of the law. Thus, works such as baptism and obedience are the fruit used by which we identify believers. They can of course be cited as actions undertaken by believers. But they do not save in and of themselves. Baptism is a sign of salvation, not a means. Mr. Thrasher is confusing the sign with that which the sign signifies. The sign of baptism is not the thing signified. It signifies forgiveness of sins; it does not actually forgive sins. Only Christ's atoning work on the cross literally forgives sins. Faith put us in union with Christ and baptism signifies we are in that union. Just as circumcision in the

Old Covenant did not actually circumcise the heart of the Jews, so baptism in the New Covenant does not literally wash away our sins. It simply signifies it. I expect to draw this out further in the later chapters.

Mr. Thrasher could just as easily use his same hermeneutic to argue an over-literalized version of the Lord's Supper. The way he makes baptism literal instead of a sign could likewise be applied to the bread being the literal physical body of Jesus and the wine being the literal physical blood of Jesus (just as the Roman Catholic Church argues, who also say baptism is necessary for forgiveness). He repeatedly cites verses describing baptism "for the forgiveness of sins," but all of them display the same fundamental error—making baptism into the thing signified rather than a sign. That simply is not what baptism is. Baptism is not a saving work.

I was glad to see Mr. Thrasher clarify that he does not believe faith and baptism are the only two conditions by which we are saved. That means he has additional works in mind that must be added to our faith. I see that he attempts to deny that works earn our salvation in his scheme. However, a work is an act of obedience to a command of God. When a reward is conditioned upon the performance of that work, then that is "earning" that conditional reward. Thus, it is no longer an unmerited reward, but rather a wage that is owed based on the agreement. When a work is offered and pay for the performance of his duties (works) is promised, then he is justly owed such wages based on the agreement. There is no logical way around the fact that Mr. Thrasher is affirming baptism as a work that must be performed in order for a man to be saved. I'm sad to say, that is salvation by faith plus works.

This overthrows Paul's whole argument in Romans 4 about Abraham being justified prior to circumcision. If he were justified after circumcision then it would not be salvation by grace alone.

Abraham would be owed a reward by his works. This is why Paul says to us in Romans 4:16...

For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (NASB)

Paul is citing this as to why faith alone is the instrument by which we are saved in the New Covenant. This is why we are considered children of Abraham. We are not justified only after baptism, for if we were, then it would not be “in accordance with grace.”

For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited

as a favor (grace), but as what is due.

5 But to the one who does not work,

but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly,

his faith is credited as righteousness

(Rom 4:2-5, NASB)

To replace circumcision with baptism destroys the entire point Paul is making and affirms the false teaching that salvation is by faith plus works. Refusing to acknowledge baptism as a saving work does nothing to overthrow the fact that Mr. Thrasher is affirming precisely that. Baptism is commanded. Obedience to that command is a work. Saying that work must be performed in order

to forgive sins is the very definition of salvation by faith plus works. This simple diagram clarifies our positions...

Guingrich: faith → justification and works

Thrasher: faith and works → justification

Paul is exceedingly clear on the fact that justification is by faith alone. In Romans he spends the first two and half chapters prosecuting both Jews and Gentiles together as all universally guilty before God. He then introduces justification by faith in the second half of chapter three. He says it is by grace (v. 24) through faith (v. 22). The righteousness of God needed for justification is for those that believe (v. 22), so that God could be just and the justifier of the one who has faith (v. 26). Nowhere are works/baptism mentioned in conjunction with faith as a co-instrument. The only time he brings up works is to set them in contrast with faith. Boasting is excluded in salvation (v. 27) for the very reason that it is by faith apart from works (v. 28). This is unquestionably the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

There has never been an alternative instrument to faith that has been proposed, and the only thing that has ever been set in partnership with it is works— the very thing denied by Paul. So much so in fact that Paul says in chapter four that the one believing God— the one having righteousness credited to him— does not work and is ungodly (v. 5). Thus, he gives the example of Abraham being justified by faith alone. Again, he reiterates that if it were by works then he would have at least something to boast about. But instead, Abraham has righteousness credited to him simply by believing God.

Not only that, but this imputation of righteousness occurred before he had even been circumcised (v. 10), so not even that aspect of obedience to the covenant could be pointed to as

necessary for justification. It is because of the sole means of faith that it can be said salvation is by grace (4:16). Works being involved overthrows the very concept Paul is laying out. This is why, as Paul continues in his description of Abraham's justification, he only mentions his faith (4:1, 3, 9, 16, 18-22), and not his obedient actions it produced.

He confirms even more strongly later in the book that grace is only grace if works are not included as a basis for salvation in any way (11:6). The first verse of chapter five then sums up what Paul had just taught by unambiguously stating that believers have been justified, and therefore have ongoing peace with God. The action of justification is communicated with a passive adverbial participle in the aorist tense, which communicates both that the act of justification is prior to the main verb of having peace, and it is an act done to the subject by another.² The result is a present continuous effect of peace. But most importantly, it is only faith which is mentioned. No works. No law.

Perhaps Mr. Thrasher affirms that one can be justified but not saved. Perhaps he thinks it's possible that a justified person is not forgiven of his sins. If so, then he will have to either redefine the word justification or conflate Paul's legal meaning with the way James uses it in the secondary meaning of vindication (Jam 2:21, 24-25). Either way, he cannot explain Abraham being justified by faith alone before circumcision. Nor can he explain anyone being saved without baptism, such as the thief on the cross who was assured of his salvation by Christ himself.

As Paul makes clear in Galatians, if a single work of the law is added to salvation, then the law must be done in totality.

² S. M. Baugh, *Introduction to Greek Tense Form Choice in the Non-Indicative Moods* (NT403 Syllabus, Westminster Seminary California, 2008), 58.

Everything written in the law must be abided by in order to escape its curse. To insist on the act of baptism for forgiveness is to place believers back under the law. The point of justification by faith alone is to abandon the law as a salvific measure, at least, on our part. The law of righteousness must still be fulfilled to receive eternal life. But the whole point of the New Covenant is that such righteousness is not from us, but rather from God (Phil 3:2-11).

This brings us to another fundamental doctrine that is denied if our own personal baptism must be performed in order to receive forgiveness—that is, the imputed righteousness of Christ. There is a sense that I could affirm the necessity of baptism, since it is indeed commanded. But every other command would have to be regarded right along with baptism. In other words, we would have to be perfect, just as Jesus commanded us to be perfect as His Father is perfect (Matt 5:48). To receive eternal life, we must be flawless, perfect—only and always obedient to God’s law in our hearts and with our hands. This is the very reason Jesus was perfect for us. It is by the imputation of His righteousness that we are counted as perfect. In Him, we are flawlessly obedient.

So we can ask the relevant question, why then did Jesus get baptized? He was perfect. He never sinned. Why would He need to be baptized? Well He told us exactly why: “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15). He got baptized to ensure that the righteousness granted to Christians by faith would include obedience to the command to be baptized. Thus, if some bitter providence prevented a believer from getting baptized, they are still have a baptism imputed to them by faith— Christ’s baptism for them. This is why the dying thief on the cross can be saved without being personally baptized. The righteousness that thief received from Jesus by imputation included the obedience to the command to be baptized. Thus, he was **counted** as baptized.

The same is true of anyone professing faith immediately before death who does not have time to be baptized. Unfortunate circumstances can likewise prevent someone from being able to be baptized. Mr. Thrasher also affirmed that oral confession of faith is a necessary condition to receive forgiveness. But we of course affirm mute people can still have saving faith. It's not the oral confession itself that saves, but the genuineness of their faith that saves. If their faith is real, then they will (if they are physically capable) profess said faith. But confessing it orally does not save them; it's just what saved people do.

The same is true of baptism. It is commanded. Saved people seek to obey the commands of God. It doesn't itself literally save and being prevented from baptism will not damn anyone. Baptism is just what saved people do. It is an expression of their saving faith. A sign of union with Christ. But Christ alone saves, faith is the sole instrument to receive Christ's saving work, and baptism is a work of obedience that Christians do as a result. Denying this reality is to deny salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Making baptism necessary is to affirm salvation by grace plus merit, through faith plus works, in Christ plus ourselves.

THRASHER'S SECOND AFFIRMATIVE

It is my pleasure to continue this Bible discussion on salvation with my friend Traever Guingrich. The present proposition reads: **“The Bible teaches that faith in Jesus as the Son of God and water baptism in His name are two of the essential conditions in order for an alien sinner to obtain the forgiveness of past sins.”** I addressed this in my first affirmative and Mr. Guingrich was *supposed* to reply in his first negative.

My initial observation is that, perhaps because of his misapprehending his obligation as the negative respondent, my opponent neglected to take up my affirmative arguments. Based upon my reading of his “rebuttal,” he did **not** specifically mention **even one** of the many passages I cited.

Since he attempted no direct refutation of any of my **arguments**, I will not repeat them here. I encourage the readers to re-read “Thrasher’s First Affirmative” to review those points. Perhaps Mr. Guingrich will reply directly to those arguments in his two remaining negative speeches.

If my count is accurate, in my first affirmative I cited book, chapter, and verse(s) references to 37 different passages of Scripture, most of which were quoted in whole or part. Several additional passages were cited using book and chapter but no specific verses. Of this total of **more than 40** Bible passages to which I referred in my first affirmative, Traever made **no comment** on them and offered **no refutation** of the points I made. Instead, he introduced **other passages**, the great majority of which did not even **mention** baptism!

My friend devoted considerable attention to “works,” saying, “Christians do works **because** God saved them.” I have no dispute

with Christians obeying the Lord's commands, since we are "created in **Christ Jesus** for good works" (*Ephesians 2:10*). However, as I pointed out in my first affirmative, we are **baptized into Christ** (*Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4*). "In Christ" is where **all spiritual blessings** are (*Ephesians 1:3*). Since **forgiveness of sins** is certainly one of those spiritual blessings, it follows that forgiveness of sins is **not** granted by God **until** those who are **outside** of Christ are **baptized into Christ!**

Traever asserted, "A work is an act of obedience to a command of God." He seems not to realize that there are **different categories** of "works" mentioned in the Bible. The kind that involves **obeying God's commands** (such as baptism) are discussed by the inspired writer James: "But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father **justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?** Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is **justified by works, and not by faith only**" (*James 2:20-24*). Note that the "works" mentioned here involve **obeying what God commanded** (*Genesis 22:2; Hebrews 11:17-19*). Even this kind of "works" (obeying God's commandments) does not **earn** salvation—it is **undeserved**, received by the **grace of God** (cf. *Titus 2:11; Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 5:10*).

In addition to the NKJV just quoted, other English translations read similarly. For example:

CSB³: "You see that a person is justified by works and **not by faith alone.**"

³ Christian Standard Bible

ESV⁴: “You see that a person is justified by works and **not by faith alone.**”

HCSB⁵: “You see that a man is justified by works and **not by faith alone.**”

Many other examples could be cited; however, these should be sufficient to reinforce the truth that I presented! Yet, my opponent had the audacity to declare, “We **are** justified by **faith alone**”—a direct contradiction to *James 2:24*!

I found it interesting, though disappointing, that my opponent claimed that **justification** is “**by faith alone,**” whereas the inspired writer James wrote, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not by faith only**” (*James 2:24*). James is **not** contradicting Paul (cf. *Romans 4:2*); they are referring to **different kinds of works**. Paul refers to any **meritorious works** whereby one could boast, but James refers to **obedience to commands of God**. In neither case do the “works” **earn** salvation. There is **nothing** that sinful people can do to **deserve** (merit) forgiveness. However, when God prescribes **conditions**, we must **obey** if we are to receive the particular manifestation of God’s grace (e.g., forgiveness of sins) that He promises. Who is right: Traever or James?

My friend wrote: “To get baptized is an act of obedience for a Christian.” He neglected to cite any Bible verse to prove his contention! In fact, many Bible verses demonstrate his assertion is untrue. I will provide only a few Bible examples to support my conclusion. *Acts 22:16*, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and **be baptized**, and **wash away your sins**, calling on the name of the Lord.” Saul was informed that his being baptized was necessary to “wash away” his “sins.” Obviously, his sins had not yet been

⁴ English Standard Version

⁵ Holman Christian Standard Bible

forgiven; he had not yet become a Christian! *Acts 2:38*, “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the **remission of sins**; ...” Here too is a statement verifying that those who heard this command had not yet had their sins remitted; they were not yet Christians (cf. *Acts 2:41, 47*). *Galatians 3:27*, “For as many of you as **were baptized into Christ** have put on Christ.” Before these Galatians were baptized they were not “in Christ,” consequently they were not yet Christians and not yet forgiven! Baptism was necessary for them to **become** Christians or “**put on Christ**”! Baptism is a condition imposed by God for people to become Christians. It is **not** a command given for those who are already Christians to obey!

I want to introduce one additional affirmative argument in support of my proposition. *1 Corinthians 1:12-13*, “Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘**I am of Paul**,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? **Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?**” The apostle indicated **two things that were necessary** for a person to be truly “of Paul”—first, **Paul must have been crucified** for that individual and the individual must have **been baptized in the name of Paul**. Since neither of those were true, they could not properly say they were “of Paul.” Similarly, for a person to truly be “of Christ,” these two things must be necessary: First, Christ had to have been **crucified** for that person. Of course, that part has been accomplished, since Jesus was crucified for every person (*1 Corinthians 15:3*; *2 Corinthians 5:14*; *Hebrews 2:9*). Second, in order for a person to be “of Christ” that person **must have been baptized in the name of Christ!**

Consequently, baptism is one condition essential to receiving forgiveness of sins.

My friend's comment that "any claim that a work must be performed in order to be saved is deviating from the gospel of grace" is untrue! The gospel of grace states that Jesus "became the author of **eternal salvation** to all who **obey Him**" (*Hebrews 5:9*). There is indisputably (if one accepts the Bible) no conflict between **salvation by grace** and the necessity of **obedience to God's commands** (cf. *Romans 6:16-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 1:21*). Even our Lord **obeyed** (*Hebrews 5:8-9; Romans 5:19*).

My friend asks about the person "who does not have **time** to be baptized." It is strange to me that this situation, introduced so often by those who reject the necessity of baptism, is never presented in God's word! The Lord rebuked the Jewish leaders (*Matthew 23:37*) because they "would not" (KJV) accept His invitation. That is a problem many people today have: they **will not** come to the Lord—they refuse His invitation. Enough "**time**" is **not** their problem!

Among the cases I cited (*Acts 16*, the Philippian jailer's household), we see the *urgency* of water baptism in the description of their "**immediately**" (after midnight) being baptized—"And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And **immediately** he and all his *family were baptized*" (*Acts 16:33*). Sadly, there have been many people who "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, **being not baptized**" (*Luke 7:30*). Again, their problem was **not** that they **did not have enough time**!

Mr. Guingrich provides a diagram that he thinks "clarifies our positions":

Guingrich: faith → justification and works

Thrasher: faith and works → justification

As I pointed out, he erringly thinks that obeying God's commands would **nullify** grace because that obedience would involve doing "works." Actually, submitting to **God's commands** would be a specific **kind** of works, that is, submission to God's requirements—**not meritorious works**, i.e., works that **merit** or **earn** salvation (*Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 4:2-4*), but commands (**conditions God has established**) for us to be granted "eternal salvation" (*Hebrews 5:9*). To whom is Jesus "the author of eternal salvation"? The God-inspired answer is "**all who obey Him**"! **Obeying Him** does **not** earn or merit forgiveness. However, as with the case of Naaman's leprosy (*2 Kings 5*, to which Traever so far has attempted no direct rebuttal), Naaman's cleansing by God's grace only occurred **when he obeyed** God's command (**all** of it, *2 Kings 5:14*). Naaman's obedience to God's command to "go and wash in the Jordan seven times" did **not** merit or earn cleansing from leprosy. Cleansing was by God's **grace**! However, cleansing was not wrought by God **until Naaman obeyed** what God told him to do!

I want to provide another Bible illustration of the point I made concerning Naaman's obedience. This second illustration is taken from *Joshua 6* (the conquest of Jericho). God said, "See! I have **given** Jericho into your hand" (*Joshua 6:2*). However, before they actually received the gift of Jericho **by God's grace**, he gave them several **commands** to be obeyed: "You shall **march around the city**, all *you* men of war; you shall go all around the city once. **This you shall do six days....** But the **seventh day you shall march around the city seven times**, and the **priests shall blow the trumpets**. It shall come to pass, **when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the**

people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat....” (*Joshua 6:3-5*). Consider the details in the Lord’s instructions. The verses that follow this quotation from *Joshua 6* describe the obedience of the Israelites to each of the parts of God’s commandments. Take note of the fact that the wall of Jericho fell **when they had obeyed all that God told them to do** (*Joshua 6:12-20*). After they had completed the first day’s actions, the wall still stood. Likewise, the second day, etc. On the seventh day they circled Jericho for the first time, but the wall still stood. Likewise, the second through seventh times that day they circled Jericho without the wall falling down. It was not until they had been obedient to **all** of the commands God had given them, **“then the wall of the city”** fell down flat, and the people took Jericho. This illustrates that the **commands of God must be obeyed** in order for the grace of God (in this case delivering Jericho into their hands) to be fully received. Applying this principle to the proposition we are addressing, when Jesus gave conditions to be obeyed for people to be **saved** (e.g., *Mark 16:16*), the blessing of salvation (forgiveness of sins) is granted by the grace of God **when** His conditions have been met, not before!

Traever argued, “Baptism is a **sign of salvation**, not a means.” I did not find a passage of Scripture that says that “baptism is a **sign** of salvation.” The reason? There is no such passage in God’s word! If he thinks there is, let him quote the passage.

My friend later states: “Baptism is **not** a saving work.” Interesting in light of what the apostle Peter wrote: “There is also an antitype which **now saves us—baptism ...”** (*1 Peter 3:21*). Please note the fact that the apostle Peter said that **baptism saves**, while Traever says **baptism does not save**—a direct contradiction!

Mr. Guingrich argues for the doctrine of “the imputed

righteousness of Christ.” He asserts, “It is by the imputation of **His** [Jesus’] righteousness that we are counted as perfect. In Him, we are flawlessly obedient.” No proof of my opponent’s theory is found anywhere in the Bible! Traever evidently thinks it’s there, so I ask him to produce a verse from God’s inspired revelation.

Since I am approaching the agreed-upon word limitation for this speech, I will only have space to make one more point. Traever cited (in a footnote) S. M. Baugh concerning the use of a passive voice, aorist tense participle, seeking to support his contention about salvation. His idea is that the passive voice indicates “an act done to the subject by another” and that the aorist participle “communicates” that “the act ... is **prior to** the main verb.”

Let us apply his reasoning to Jesus’ statement (*Mark 16:16a*), “He who **believes** and **is baptized** will be **saved**.” The Greek text, transliterated, is *ho pisteusas kai baptistheis sothesetai*⁶. The words *believes* and *is baptized* are (in Koine Greek) **aorist participles**⁷ and “is baptized” is passive voice. The main verb is “will be saved.” **Who** “will be saved”? The one who **believes** and **is baptized**. As I understood Traever’s contention on this point, an aorist participle is used to refer to time **prior to** the action of the main verb! Since the main verb is “will be saved,” the actions of **believing** and **being baptized** are **prior to** the time the person is **saved**! Consequently, according to my understanding of my opponent’s argument, my proposition is demonstrated to be true.⁸

⁶ *The Interlinear Literal Translation of The Greek New Testament* (1952, p. 145), commonly called *Berry’s Interlinear*, by George Ricker Berry, and *The Zondervan Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* (1975, p. 161).

⁷ *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, Zondervan, 1970, pp. 326 and 65.

⁸ A more thorough discussion on this topic is available in an article by Thomas N. Thrasher (“Arguments from the Greek, Part 1”), Indianapolis: *Faith and Facts Quarterly* 44:4 (October 2017), 40-45.

If the Lord wills, I will respond to more of Traever's statements in my next speech. Thank you for reading and thoughtfully considering my remarks in the light of God's eternal truth. Please give your attention to the rebuttal offered by my friend, Traever Guingrich.

GUINGRICH'S SECOND REBUTTAL

Mr. Thrasher claims I did not respond to even one of his 40+ Bible passages in his 1st affirmative. It is a common tactic in debates to over-cite many verses to give the perception that one's argument is strong and biblical, and then decry that not every verse is responded to. However, all the verses say the same essential thing (we are baptized for the forgiveness of sins) and Mr. Thrasher's application of them have the same fatal flaw. That is, not only does he interpret them in such a way as to deny Paul's teaching on justification by faith apart from works (as I made clear), but he over-literalizes the sacrament of baptism. For that reason I responded to them all collectively by saying he "makes baptism into the thing signified rather than a sign." I don't need to respond to each individual verse pointing out an identical error every time. So yes, those verses were responded to & yes his position was refuted.

Mr. Thrasher also says we are baptized into Christ (of course we are) which is where we find forgiveness of sins (again, of course). But our baptism doesn't put us into Christ; our faith does. We are in union with Christ by faith alone and He dwells in our hearts ***through faith*** (Eph 3:17). That is why we are all sons of God ***through faith*** (Gal 3:26). Perhaps Mr. Thrasher believes a man can come to faith, have Christ dwell in his heart, and be a son of God, and yet not have his sins forgiven simply because he did not receive baptism yet. I propose that is an absurd position and ought to be rejected. If we believe in our heart then we are saved (Rom 10:9). Baptism is what we do because we are saved; not what we do to get saved.

It seems clear that Mr. Thrasher fundamentally does not

understand what a sacrament/ordinance even is. Christ gave the church two sacraments—baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Both of them are symbols/signs of His work that saves us. A sacrament is a visible sign. But it is not literally the thing that it signifies. Nor does it do the thing that it signifies. A sign that tells us the speed limit does nothing to impede a car’s velocity. It is a sign. Nor does a wedding ring cause us to be married. It is a sign. Baptism is a sign. Baptism is said to be “for the forgiveness of sin” because that is what it represents. It doesn’t literally forgive anything. Only Christ does that through His work on the cross. ***Christ’s death forgives sins!*** A sacrament is a picture of that works. It is meant to be representative in its very nature. Frankly, taking a sacrament to literally do what it signifies is a childish way to read Scripture.

Just as the bread is a ***sign*** of Christ’s broken body for us, it is not literally His flesh & breaking it does not literally atone for our sins. It is bread. Just as the wine is a ***sign*** of His blood shed for believers, it is not literally His blood and it does not literally wash away our sin. It is wine. Just as the cup is a ***sign*** of the New Covenant, it is not literally a covenant. It is a cup. Just as baptism is a ***sign*** of our sins being washed away and putting the old man to death and being raised anew, it is not literally what washes away our sins and regenerates us. It is a baptism. Sacraments are signs. Only Christ’s work literally saves us; not the signs of His work. Mr. Thrasher denies this and adds to the work of Christ by insisting that our application of the signs actually procures the forgiveness that Christ Himself procures by His work alone.

This is the exact same error that the Roman Catholic Church makes regarding both baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They make them literal instead of signs. They insist they do what they signify (*ex opere operato*). The same argument Mr. Thrasher is using regarding baptism can be used to claim the wine and bread are the

literal body and blood of Jesus. In fact, it is curious why he is inconsistent in not applying the same interpretive pattern to both. The fact that he does not do so proves his error. How can he deny transubstantiation given that he does not think sacraments are signs? Why takes the words on baptism literally but not the words on the bread and cup?

The next serious error Mr. Thrasher displays is his equivocation of the justification spoken of by James and the justification spoken of by Paul. This again is the same flawed argument in the Roman Catholic Church and it is commonly heard from those that deny Paul's clear teaching on justification by faith alone (apart from works).

Paul is speaking of *forensic* (or legal) justification. Hence, he speaks of Abraham's justification in Genesis 15 when he believed God (faith) and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (imputed righteousness, literally). Thus, he speaks of Abraham being justified in Genesis 22 when he was willing to offer Isaac. Obviously, Abraham was already forensically justified by then. Righteousness was already reckoned to him years earlier. His willingness to offer Isaac in Genesis 22 just gave clear *proof* or *evidence* that his faith was real. However, the faith saved him; not his works.

James' evidentiary sense of justification is the exact same as when Jesus says wisdom is "justified by her children" (Luke 7:35). It means vindicated. Wisdom is not forensically justified by her children, obviously. Rather, it is vindicated to be wise by her children. Wisdom is proven to be wisdom by its fruit. The results are the proof (vindication).

So of course we are not vindicated by faith alone. Faith is only seen in our works. Only in that sense do works justify (vindicate) us as legitimate believers. Abraham was saved before his works in

Genesis 22. But he gave clear proof of that in his obedience. This is why he is used as an example by Paul in Romans 4 to teach (forensic) justification by faith alone. We are justified by faith apart from works (Rom 3:28), **not by faith plus the work of baptism.**

Likewise God credits righteousness to us **apart from works** (Rom 4:6)—that is, by faith alone. Which means that Christ’s baptism on our behalf is credited to us apart from the work of baptism. Christ fulfilled all righteousness. That is the reason He was baptized (Matt 3:15). He didn’t need forgiveness of sins. But He was baptized so that the righteousness we received from Him was complete—including obedience to the command to get baptized. Notice how Mr. Thrasher didn’t even begin to explain why Jesus would be baptized. Every believer, including the repentant (but unbaptized) thief on the cross, **is counted as baptized** because they have the righteous works of the baptized Christ reckoned to them by their faith.

Mr. Thrasher’s clear misunderstanding of Paul’s justification and James’ justification (vindication) shows his shallow understanding of how salvation actually works. It is odd how much he adopts the Roman Catholic arguments against the Protestant Reformation. Whether this is intentional or not is unknown, but again, it is a childish way to read the Scriptures.

Next, Mr. Thrasher attempts to argue that there are different types of works—some that are meritorious and some that are simply obedience to commands of God. This is baseless semantics with absolutely zero basis in Scripture. Dear reader, do not be deceived by these word games. All works are obedience to God’s commands. Paul’s point about them is that if they cause something like forgiveness of sins then **they would be earning it**—the very thing Mr. Thrasher insists about baptism!

On this we agree—baptism is commanded. Mr. Thrasher claims that forgiveness of sins does not happen until a man is baptized. Thus, a man's obedience to get baptized is a work. Therefore, his forgiveness of sins **is merited** by his obedience in his scheme. That is justification by faith plus works—a denial of the entire book of Galatians and the 1st seven chapters of Romans. Who is right: Mr. Thrasher or Paul?

Mr. Thrasher cites Hebrews 5:9 that speaks of Christ's perfection by obeying the law and His becoming the source of salvation for those that obey Him. This speaks nothing against my position. Jesus merited eternal life through obedience. We cannot do that. That is the whole point of Christ's imputed righteousness. How does he know the difference between meritorious works and works that meet conditions that we must obey? The gospel message is that Christ has met all the conditions for us to be saved; not that Christ has done His part and we must do ours. Again, this is overwhelmingly obvious salvation by faith plus works. It's funny how when Paul was saying that we are justified by faith apart from works he never once bothered to mention this false works category difference Mr. Thrasher has invented.

The ones that obey are the ones that are saved for the simple fact that genuine faith produces obedience. The same Spirit that works faith in our hearts likewise works obedience. Obedience is **descriptive** of believers. It is not the cause or condition of our salvation. In fact, Romans 4:5 teaches the direct opposite of Mr. Thrasher's understanding of Hebrews 5:9.

But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness (Rom 4:5)

Mr. Thrasher also claims there is no situation presented in

God's word about a person who does not have time to be baptized. This is laughably false. Perhaps he has once again forgotten about the thief on the cross who came to faith with no time or opportunity to be baptized. Did he have any days, or even hours left on his life to find water for baptism? Of course not. Yet we know for a fact he was saved without a personal baptism. But once again, Christ's baptism (part of His perfect righteousness) was counted as his own, by faith.

In the same way today, there are those that come to faith right before their death and are thus providentially prevented from being baptized. He says that is not a problem presented in God's word, which is a red herring (and already proven false). It's irrelevant to the fact that this happens in real life. People come to faith on their death bed. They die before they are able to be baptized. Children have child-like and immature, yet real faith, and die before being baptized. The thief came to faith in the midst of his crucifixion. So yes, it is a clear problem for Mr. Thrasher's false simply teaching. None of these instances are examples of people lost because they were not able to be baptized into Christ. Their faith alone puts them in union with their Savior. Baptism simply pictures that inward reality; it does not forgive their sins. Their Savior's death does that.

It is also interesting that Mr. Thrasher cites Old Covenant examples (Jericho, Naaman) to show that obedience brings God's rewards to argue that in the New Covenant obedience brings God's salvation. But the Old Covenant message is "do this and live" (Lev 18:15). The New Covenant message is Christ has done everything so you can live. Jericho and Naaman prove nothing other than the fact I have already argued that Mr. Thrasher is advocating salvation by faith plus works of obedience. His own illustrations prove this further. He cites works of obedience that merit reward based on

the conditions God has established. He seeks to impose that same Old Covenant model on salvation by grace in the New Covenant. This is a complete denial of salvation by grace alone. This is salvation by meeting the conditions of obedience (doing the works) God has established, i.e., salvation by faith plus works.

What I am responding to is the overwhelmingly obvious fact that Mr. Thrasher's affirmation is justification by faith plus works. He can deny that all he wants by playing words games about baptism being a work, but the fact remains. He admits baptism is a work, which is good, because it is. But he claims it is a different kind of work. He never gives a biblical case for different categories of works or why some are supposedly meritorious. Works are acts of obedience to the law of God. They do not play a role in forensically justifying us.

It's also odd that Mr. Thrasher insists that baptism isn't a meritorious work and yet says we are justified by faith plus works. And the work he says we need is baptism. Simply put, this makes no sense. If he were right, then baptism merits justification. If forgiveness of sins is promised for baptism, then getting baptized *merits* that reward. It earns it according to the conditions God puts forward. Just as if a parent promises a child ice cream for cleaning their room. Cleaning their room therefore merits ice cream. That how conditions and merit work.

Do not miss this fundamental fact—Mr. Thrasher is denying that Christ alone saves. He is saying Christ does part of the work, and we do the rest. Our fulfillment of God's conditions makes salvation happen. Therefore, according to his own theology, Christ's work on the cross is not effectual—it does not objectively atone for sin, and Christ alone does not save.

Can Mr. Thrasher answer the question ... has there ever been

a person that came to faith but was not able to be baptized? We obviously know of one—the thief already mentioned. But does he think there has ever been a person in the past 2000 years that has come to genuine faith and desired baptism yet was providentially prevented from receiving baptism? If he affirms that there is, then he disproves his own position. If he denies that there is, then he denies Romans 10:9 and that the work of Christ alone saves. He has added to salvation by grace and presents a false teaching that falls under Paul’s anathema in Galatians.

Unfortunately our tight word count prevents me from addressing imputed righteousness more thoroughly—a fundamental doctrine of the true Christian faith. Mr. Thrasher shockingly claims this is found nowhere in the Bible. I look forward to disproving that falsehood in my next rebuttal. I will likewise address the common misunderstanding of 1 Peter 3:21 offered by Mr. Thrasher. Both of these errors are once again found in the Roman Catholic Church. With so much of Mr. Thrasher argument being nearly identical to the Roman Church it is a wonder he does not go the whole way and submit to the papacy!

THRASHER'S THIRD AFFIRMATIVE

It is with pleasure that I continue this discussion on salvation with Traever Guingrich as I defend the gospel of our Lord (*Philippians 1:7, 17*) from those who pervert God's truth (*Galatians 1:6-9*). My proposition is: **"The Bible teaches that faith in Jesus as the Son of God and water baptism in His name are two of the essential conditions in order for an alien sinner to obtain the forgiveness of past sins."**

In beginning this final affirmative speech on the proposition, I feel disappointment with Traever's approach. When I read his "First Rebuttal" (which he originally called his first "affirmative" when he sent it to me), I was disappointed that he had ignored his responsibility of responding **specifically** to my affirmative arguments on the necessity of baptism to receive forgiveness through the blood of Jesus. Nevertheless, I prepared my Second Affirmative and sent it to him. Evidently realizing his failure to address my affirmative points, he prepared a revised speech and sent it to me in place of the speech he originally submitted. This strategy necessitated rewriting my Second Affirmative. This process delayed the progress of the debate for several weeks. Yet, despite my efforts to provide him opportunity to fulfill his responsibility in the negative, Traever still has devoted most of his "negative" speeches to making **affirmative arguments**, which he should incorporate into his affirmative speeches during the last half of this debate. This fact is easily demonstrated when one is attentive to his line of argumentation in previous speeches. By foregoing his responsibility to reply specifically to my arguments, mostly on NT passages addressing the design of water baptism, he has offered affirmative arguments for the **second proposition** (on "faith alone," which he has mentioned numerous times in his first

two “negatives”). As examples, in his “first rebuttal” he said,

- “We are justified by **faith alone**” (page 17)
- “**faith alone** is the instrument by which we are saved in the New Covenant” (page 19)
- “justification is by **faith alone**” (page 20)
- “The point of justification by **faith alone** is to abandon the law as a salvific measure, at least, on our part” (page 21)

In his Second Negative, Traever does the same thing. For example, he says,

- “We are in union with Christ by **faith alone**” (page 33)
- “Paul’s clear teaching on justification by **faith alone**” (page 35)
- “justification by **faith alone**” (page 36)
- “Their **faith alone** puts them in union with their Savior” (page 38)

The instances cited above are only a few of approximately 20 times (according to my count) in his two previous speeches that he argued “faith alone” (which is the point of the second proposition in which he has agreed to affirm that)!

Traever’s approach reminds me of what the apostle Peter observed: “... our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles ... in which are some things hard to understand, which **untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures**” (2 Peter 3:15-16). Traever has likewise “twisted” (distorted, perverted) **the Scriptures**, as well as being guilty of several **misrepresentations of my position** on the

proposition, and (unfortunately) it will ultimately lead to his destruction, unless he repents of his error and receives God's forgiveness (2 Peter 3:9). He has misrepresented my position several times, although I made a diligent effort to state clearly what I believe.

Despite his approach, Traever has actually admitted my affirmative contention in the numerous NT passages I have quoted when he stated, "**All the verses say the same essential thing (we are baptized for the forgiveness of sins).**" Note that he wrote that **all** the verses I gave **say** "**we are baptized for the forgiveness of sins**"! Consequently, by this admission it is unnecessary for me to **quote again** all of those verses on the design of baptism, because **Traever admits** that they **all** teach what I have contended: "**We are baptized for the forgiveness of sins.**"

However, Traever also argued, "Baptism is a **sign of salvation**, not a means." Although he spent much space in his "rebuttal" **asserting** this view, he did **not** produce a **passage of Scripture** that says that "baptism is a **sign** of salvation." The reason? There is no such passage in God's word! If he thinks there is, let him quote the passage. He neglected to make any attempt to **prove** this claim by God's word!

Traever also asserted, "Baptism is **not** a saving work." I noted that this is interesting in view of what the apostle Peter wrote: "There is also an antitype which **now saves us—baptism ...**" (1 Peter 3:21). Please note the fact that the apostle Peter said that **baptism saves**, while Traever says **baptism does not save**—a direct contradiction! Of course, I have explained that the water does not save, but Jesus does—**when** we submit to His commands.

Some Questions

To help focus our attention on the issues relevant to this

discussion, asking and answering questions can be a useful feature. Therefore, I am submitting a few questions to Traever.

1. Precisely **when** were your sins forgiven?
2. Does God desire that **every person** be forgiven?
3. Is a person required by God's revealed Truth to "**call upon the name of the Lord to be saved**"?
4. Did God "elect" **all** of those individuals who are included in the "elect" **at the same time**? If so, what was that time?
5. **When** did the Lord **forgive** "the thief on the cross"?
6. Is it **possible** that "the thief on the cross" had been among the multitudes who went out to be baptized by John (*Matthew 3:5-6*), perhaps before he became a "thief"?
7. What Bible passage or passages say(s) that baptism is a "**sign**" that the one being baptized **has already been forgiven**?

Mr. Guingrich argues for the doctrine of "the imputed righteousness of Christ." He asserts, "It is by the imputation of **His** [Jesus'] righteousness that we are counted as perfect. In Him, we are flawlessly obedient." No proof of this theory is found anywhere in the Bible or in Traever's speeches! He evidently **thinks** it's there, and he promised to produce evidence from God's inspired revelation. I eagerly await his effort. However, I would comment that *Romans 4:7-8* is sometimes proposed as evidence, yet that passage says, "Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed *is the* man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin." Please observe that **the person to whom the Lord will not impute sin is the man who is forgiven!** I have demonstrated that the forgiveness of sins by God is granted to the individual who **believes and is baptized**, as my proposition

states (cf. *Mark 16:16*).

The Bible does say that baptism involves a “**likeness**” of the death, burial, and resurrection” of Christ: “Therefore we were **buried** with Him **through baptism** into death, that just as Christ was **raised from the dead** by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the **likeness of His death**, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His resurrection*, knowing this, that our old man was **crucified with Him**” (*Romans 6:3-5*). However, that is not my friend’s contention. He said that baptism is a **sign of forgiveness**—that is, that the person being baptized has previously been forgiven of all of his/her sins! I’ve repeatedly demonstrated that the Bible disproves this position (*Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16*; etc.).

In his letter to the saints in Rome, Paul reminded his audience: “Do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were **baptized into His death**? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should **walk in newness of life**” (*Romans 6:3-4*). Paul later commented, “God be thanked that *though* you **were** slaves of sin, yet you **obeyed** from the heart that **form of doctrine** [cf. 6:3-4—the “form” was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus] to which you were delivered. And having been **set free from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness” (*6:17-18*). **When** were they “set free from sin”? When they “**obeyed**” (being “**baptized into Christ**” in the likeness of His death, burial, and resurrection). Traever made no attempt to refute Paul’s argument!

In my second speech I noted that Traever argued concerning the use of a passive voice, aorist tense participle indicates that “the

act ... is **prior to** the main verb.” I pointed out that, when Jesus said in Mark 16:16a, “He who **believes** and **is baptized** will be **saved**,” the words *believes* and *is baptized* are **aorist participles**⁹ and “is baptized” is passive voice. The main verb is “will be saved.” Consequently, since the main verb is “will be saved,” the actions of **believing and being baptized** are **prior to** the time the person is **saved**! Therefore, even according to my opponent’s argument, my proposition is demonstrated to be true.¹⁰

Traever wrote: “Mr. Thrasher also says we are baptized into Christ (of course we are) which is where we find forgiveness of sins (again, of course).” Then, in his effort to “explain away” what he has admitted, Mr. Guingrich says, “We are all sons of God **through faith** (Gal 3:26).” Oops! He **almost** referred to one of the passages I introduced (*Galatians 3:27*), but he stopped short. Why? Paul wrote in verse 27, “**For** as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ.” The word “for” (translated from *gar*) “adduces the Cause or gives the Reason of a preceding statement”¹¹ So, why **are** those Galatians “sons of God through faith”? Paul wrote that it was **because** they were **baptized into Christ**! My friend admitted that “in Christ” is “where we find forgiveness of sins.” Therefore, despite the denials of my opponent, baptism is necessary to receive forgiveness of sins!

My friend further proposes that “if we believe in our heart then we are saved (Rom 10:9).” Why did he not quote that verse in its entirety? In that verse Paul wrote, “That **if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus** and believe in your heart that God has

⁹ *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, Zondervan, 1970, pp. 326 and 65.

¹⁰ A more thorough discussion on this topic is available in an article by Thomas N. Thrasher (“Arguments from the Greek, Part 1”), Indianapolis: *Faith and Facts Quarterly* 44:4 (October 2017), 40-45.

¹¹ Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Zondervan, 1967, 109.

raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Paul states that one’s “confess[ion] with the mouth” of the Lord Jesus is also necessary for salvation! But Traever contends that’s not so—“faith alone” is necessary he affirms, so “confession with the mouth” is not! I accept that **faith is necessary**, as my proposition states, but it is **not “faith alone”**! This verse says that something in addition to faith is necessary for one to be saved; **confession with the mouth** is also required (*Romans 10:9-10*). The readers may recall that I made this point early in my first speech (see page 9). Traever has not responded specifically to my observation on this.

Mr. Guingrich claimed that “Christ gave the church two sacraments—baptism and the Lord’s Supper.” I searched several English translations for the word “sacrament,” but I only found one (a Catholic translation¹²) that used the word even once, and that was a mistranslation! I ask Mr. Guingrich to cite **a passage or passages** in the Bible that teach(es) that “Christ gave the church two sacraments—baptism and the Lord’s Supper.” He once again is guilty of asserting without giving Bible proof. Remember, the proposition says, **“The Bible teaches ...”**!

Traever asks, “Has there ever been a person that came to faith but was not able to be baptized? We obviously know of one—the thief already mentioned.” Two of the questions I asked earlier address the issue concerning “the thief.” I will say more after he answers them forthrightly. However, for now, I point out that the case of “the thief” is irrelevant to my proposition. Just as many other cases are (e.g., Adam and Eve, Melchizedek, and others who lived and died **before** the New Testament of Jesus Christ became effective; cf. *Hebrews 9:15-17*). Therefore, the case of “the thief” has no bearing upon what Jesus’ covenant (the **New Testament**)

¹² Ephesians 5:32 in the *Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition*

requires of sinners to be forgiven. When Traever affirms (in the second proposition) that faith in Jesus is required to be forgiven, does that mean that those who lived and died before Jesus' earthly ministry occurred will all be lost because they **didn't believe** in Jesus as the Son of God? No! (although that may not be **Traever's** answer). Why were people in the Old Testament period not required to believe in Jesus as the Son of God? Simple. Jesus' testament (will) had not become effective yet! *Hebrews 9:17* says, "A testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has **no power at all while the testator lives.**" Therefore, "the [repentant] thief" (and Adam and Eve, Melchizedek, and others of that dispensation) was not subject to the New Testament requirement of water baptism (*Acts 2:38; 10:48; 18:8; 22:16; etc.*). **We are!**

My friend shares his (mis)understanding of "**forensic**" justification and "**evidentiary**" justification as his way of reconciling the apparent contradiction between Paul and James in relation to "works." These are terms *someone* (probably not Traever) originated for this purpose. God's word does not employ such terms or concepts in *Romans 4:6*, *James 2:24*, or **any other Bible passage**. The inspired writer James says, "You see then that a man **is justified by works, and not by faith only**" (2:24). The "works" to which James refers is **obedience to God's commands** (cf. 2:20-24). Faith only (faith alone) does not suffice! "Works" (**obedience to God's commands**) is required for justification), **not faith alone** as Traever contends!

My opponent rails against "justification by faith plus works," claiming that this would be "a denial of the entire book of Galatians and the 1st seven chapters of Romans." However, these sections of the Bible clearly teach that we are **baptized into Christ** (*Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4*), where salvation/forgiveness is located (cf. *Ephesians 1:3*). Traever admits this (page 33), yet he doesn't accept

it. His adherence to Calvinistic theology leads him to “explain it away”!

Traever **dismisses** my references to **Naaman** and **Jericho** as Old Covenant examples. My point was that those people received God’s blessings **when they obeyed all that God commanded them!** I could cite, if I had sufficient space remaining, NT passages (e.g., John 9, the healing of the blind man) illustrating the same point. However, I must close for now.

GUINGRICH'S THIRD NEGATIVE

Unfortunately our tight word count prevents me from responding to all of Mr. Thrasher's errors and confusions, as well as several of his questions (some of which are irrelevant and intentionally distracting from the point). If we tripled the allowable word count perhaps I could address his off-topic questions seemingly included for no other reason than to take us far afield from the subject at hand.

Mr. Thrasher simply picks and chooses when to literally interpret both my own words as well as the Bible's. By doing so he attempts to paint the picture that I have affirmed his interpretation or denied my own assertions. I will leave it to the reader to see through his hackneyed debating "tactics."

He is upset that I have used justification by faith alone as a defense against his error simply because I will be affirming it more robustly in the 2nd half of this work. But that is simply unavoidable. In denying salvation by faith plus baptism I am by default asserting justification by faith alone. It is no different than if I were defending the Trinity by affirming the deity of Christ. Both the deity of Christ and justification by faith alone are such overwhelmingly obvious truths in Scripture that they serve as a defense against heresies. Such is the case in bringing up justification against what Mr. Thrasher asserts. I will assert it even more thoroughly in my affirmative sections while Mr. Thrasher will undoubtedly go on affirming justification by faith plus works as he has throughout this work. Even his starting proposition affirms this—he believes we perform a work (baptism) in order to have our sins forgiven. That teaching is anathema according to Paul (Gal 1:8). Do not believe it, dear reader! This fundamentally denies salvation by Christ alone.

He adds our own works to Christ's in order to obtain forgiveness of sins. Christ alone saves; you do not make His work effectual by doing anything! You **prove** His work by obeying.

Mr. Thrasher would have you believe that I affirm his false teaching when I concur that his cited verses say we are "baptized for the forgiveness of sins." What I obviously deny is his wrong interpretation of such verses that overly-literalize the sign of baptism. Baptism is "for" that in the sense that it **represents** that. He struggles because he thinks there needs to be a verse that systematically teaches baptism as a sign with those exact words rather than it simply being comprehensively treated as a sign, like the Lord's Supper. The fact that it is a sign is a deductive conclusion from the complete testimony of baptism in Scripture. This is Just as the doctrine of the Trinity is a biblical fact yet it is not systematically taught and the specific word "Trinity" is not used.

Ironically, one of the clearest verses that baptism is a sign is 1 Peter 3:21 that states "baptism... now saves you." Mr. Thrasher does not bother citing the rest of Peter's words in v.21 or what comes before since it directly contradicts his assertion that baptism as an act literally washes away sins.

However, Peter is teaching an analogical correspondence to the flood. This is direct biblical typology. Peter says "baptism, which corresponds to this"—referring to the flood. Did the flood save anyone? No. The ark saved them through the flood. We are saved through the baptismal waters of judgment/death by being in the ark that is Christ. Christ underwent the baptism of God's wrath and it is through unity with Him through faith that we are protected (saved) from judgment.

It is Christ who saves; not literally baptism. 1 Peter 3:21 is explicit typology. As such, Peter immediately clarifies that he does

not mean it is the physical act itself. He says, “not the removal of dirt from the flesh.” This is nothing more than a euphemistic manner of saying **not the act of baptism itself**. It’s not like there was some early church heresy claiming we must have dirt washed off our bodies in order to be saved. The need for physical cleanliness was never a proposed condition to salvation. So he is obviously not refuting some such error when he says that the act of washing itself does not save. **He is saying the act of baptism doesn’t save!** This literally directly contradicts Mr. Thrasher’s entire premise. The entire point of 1 Peter 3:21 is to teach precisely the opposite of what Mr. Thrasher has construed it to mean.

Peter is instead tying baptism to what it represents, again, in the very verse (v.21) where he explains baptism saves as “an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus.” In other words, **faith!** Peter is simply connecting baptism to the faith in Jesus it represents. All Mr. Thrasher has to do is read the entire verse rather than cutting the phrase he likes from its surrounding context, since it is that context that so clearly refutes him. It is the faith alone that saves because it is faith alone that connects us to Christ’s resurrecting power, as Peter says at the end of v.21. Like I have been saying, Christ alone saves; not Christ plus our work of baptism.

Still, it seems Mr. Thrasher is confused by baptism being a sign rather than baptism being the thing that it signifies, seemingly because of the sacramental union language saying it is “for the forgiveness of sins” (the thing that it signifies). He doesn’t see his own inconsistency in understanding the language of sacramental union when Jesus says of the bread “this is my body,” nor when Jesus says of the cup “this is the New Covenant in my blood.” He rightly understands *that* to be a sign, yet he doesn’t understand the same to be true of baptism. Every time I have brought it up he has

fled from that argument because it exposes his error. As I have pointed out, Christ doesn't say the bread *merely* represents His body and the wine *merely* represents His blood; He literally says they **ARE** His body and blood.

We know for a fact Christ's words can only be understood spiritually, by way of sacramental union. Just the same is true of baptism. Peter is simply using the words of sacramental union for baptism just as Jesus did with the Lord's Supper. The sign is so closely identified with that which it signifies that the effects of the one are attributed to the other. We see this as well in Acts 20:28 where Paul speaks of the "blood of God" even though God does not literally have a body or blood.

In spite of the fact that Mr. Thrasher brings it up, the word "sacrament" itself is irrelevant. He only calls attention to it to obfuscate the point. Baptism and Lord's Supper are acts/signs done to signify Christ's salvific work. Just as we don't need the word "Trinity" to affirm that doctrine, so we don't need the word "sacrament/ordinance" to affirm they are signs. Like "Trinity," "sacrament" is simply a word that describes what we see Scripture teach.

Mr. Thrasher again brings up James 2:24 clearly displaying the fact he does not understand the semantic domain of the word "justify." I cited the proof that the word is used by Christ Himself in the evidentiary sense (Luke 7:35). The context of James 2 shows he is using it the same evidentiary way. I also cited the fact that Abraham's forensic (legal) justification already took place in Genesis 15, many years before what James is even referencing—again proving they are not using justification in the same sense. So while Mr. Thrasher seems content to accept the false notion that Paul and James contradict each other, any reasonable reader can see they are not speaking of the same thing when using the word

justification in different ways.

Mr. Thrasher also admits his utter ignorance of the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ. This makes sense since he has by his claims asserted his own righteousness through obedience—meeting one of the conditions for salvation through his own work. Notice he has not even attempted to explain why Jesus would undergo a baptism for the forgiveness of sins, especially if baptism literally forgives sins as he claims. Perhaps Mr. Thrasher believes the Lord Himself had personal sins that needed to be forgiven? I doubt that is his belief, but it remains a fact that his scheme cannot even begin to explain Christ’s baptism.

However, imputed righteousness is the clear teaching of 1 Corinthians 5:21. Our sins are imputed to Christ (“He made Him to be sin”) and He atones for them on the cross. This removes one of our barriers to eternal life—the presence of sin and guilt. But the verse also says this is so that “we might become the righteousness of God.” Christ’s righteousness is then imputed to us through faith. There is a double imputation (our sin to Christ and Christ’s righteousness to us). This eliminates the other barrier to receiving eternal life—our absence of merit. We merit eternal life when our sins are removed and Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us. This way God is just and justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26). Notice, Romans 3:26 does not say it is the one who has faith **and is baptized**; but it is the one who simply has faith who is justified.

Paul’s most thorough teaching on imputed righteousness is found in Philippians 3:2-11. There he could not make it any clearer. He describes his own “religious resume” of good works. His point is he has more reason than anyone to claim a righteousness of his own through obedience. If anyone has reason to boast, it is him. But he rejects all his own goodness as rubbish so that he may gain

Christ. Then just look how clearly he teaches a righteousness from Jesus (imputed to him) through faith in v.9: ***not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.***

Paul's confidence is in the righteousness imputed to him ***from God through faith***. Mr. Thrasher is telling you to instead put confidence in your own obedience (your own righteousness). He is boasting in his faith and baptism. That is righteousness derived from the law that commands us to obey and get baptized! Mr. Thrasher does not place his confidence in Christ alone as Paul does. He puts it also in himself since he is the one who obeyed and he is the one who chose to get baptized. This is the same false religion of the Pharisees.

Mr. Thrasher makes unfounded claims about the unbaptized thief who is saved in the New Covenant even though he is literally trusting in Christ alone. Jesus' repeated command even before His death is believe in me (John 11, 14). But since he does so, I will cite even further evidence that salvation precedes baptism. In Acts 10, Peter is told to preach to Cornelius and a group of Gentiles gathered at his home. In verse 43 Peter makes a promise that Mr. Thrasher rejects in his affirmation of baptismal necessity. Peter tells them, "through [Christ's] name ***everyone who believes in Him*** receives forgiveness of sins." This is literally what I have affirmed and Mr. Thrasher has denied. He cannot say the one who believes receives the forgiveness of sins like I do because he adds to forgiveness/salvation when he requires baptism. I however, agree with Peter's simply gospel message; if you believe in Jesus your sins are forgiven. You do not need to be baptized to be forgiven; you just have to trust in Jesus.

If that weren't enough, we have even further proof of this fact

because Cornelius and the Gentiles gathered at his home heard the gospel preached and believed it. Then we see the Holy Spirit came upon them (vv.44-45) giving irrefutable evidence they were saved (Rom 8:9, Eph 1:13, 1 John 3:24). Only after this are they baptized. It is a 100% undeniable fact that this group of Gentiles were all saved and received the gift of the Holy Spirit upon faith alone and only then, **after that fact**, were they baptized. Read the passage for yourself and ask yourself: were these believers saved after getting baptized? Or, did they get baptized **because** they were saved? The text clearly teaches the latter in contradiction to Mr. Thrasher.

Baptism is an act of faith that signifies salvation. It does not itself forgive sins. Christ alone forgives sins via His work on the cross. Trusting in Jesus puts us in union with Him and saves us from our sins. This is why I can affirm the clear promise of Jesus in John 6:47 where He tells the crowd, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **he who believes has eternal life.**"

Yet again, this is a clear statement that promises us salvation through faith alone. And yet again Mr. Thrasher cannot affirm these simple words due to the fact that he affirms that we must also be baptized to have eternal life. Mr. Thrasher makes our Lord a liar. He makes the Apostle Paul a liar. He makes the Apostle Peter a liar. If Mr. Thrasher were present in the home of Cornelius while Peter promised them forgiveness by simply believing in Jesus, would he dare interrupt the apostle to correct him by saying, "and you must also be baptized in order to have your sins forgiven?" When Jesus tells the crowd in John 6 that the one who believes has eternal life, would he have loudly cleared his throat to correct our Lord by saying, "What Jesus meant to say was that he who believes **and is baptized** has eternal life?"

Remember, dear reader, I have affirmed all Christians ought to be baptized. Anyone refusing baptism is giving clear evidence that

his faith is false. Such a person will not inherit eternal life. But it is not his refusal to be baptized that prevents his forgiveness; it is his false faith. True saving faith trusts Christ alone. It gives evidence it is real (vindicates/justifies itself) by obedience to Christ's commands, such as baptism. But it is Christ's work alone that forgives sins. Faith is simply the instrument by which we are united to Him and receive the benefits of His saving work.

If anyone preaches any other gospel than salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, let him be anathema. Unfortunately, that is precisely what Mr. Thrasher has done. I implore him to repent and trust in Jesus alone and count his own baptism as rubbish so that he might gain Christ— not having a righteousness of his own derived from getting baptized, but a righteousness which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Phil 3:9). A perfect righteousness and complete forgiveness are offered to all who believe in the name of Jesus Christ. Don't claim His work is ineffectual to save by affirming the necessity of baptism or any other good work. Simply get baptized and do good works out of gratitude to Christ and to give evidence that your faith is real.

GUINGRICH'S FIRST AFFIRMATIVE

The subject of justification by faith alone is worthy of debate because it strikes at the core of the gospel. Denying this doctrine puts one firmly outside of historical Christianity along with the Roman Catholic Church and the Galatian heretics who were anathematized by the Apostle Paul. As the orthodox have long-recognized, "justification is the article of the standing or falling of the church." A clear and precise declaration on justification is of the utmost importance to maintaining the true faith.

I am affirming the position that the Bible teaches that faith is the only condition required for an alien sinner to obtain the forgiveness of sins. Immediately, it must be clarified that when I affirm this, I am not using the word "condition" in the same sense that Mr. Thrasher has used the term in his affirmative. I do not bring this up to debate it so much as to prevent equivocation between our usages and thus confusion by the reader.

I do not mean faith is a condition sinners meet. Rather, I mean it in the sense that ***faith is the sole instrument*** by which a sinner is justified, placed in union with Christ, and receives His righteousness by way of imputation. It is in ***Christ alone*** that we obtain forgiveness of sins and it is by faith alone that we ***receive Christ***.

This saving faith is a natural product of the new life that the Holy Spirit works in a spiritually dead sinner to make him alive (Eph 2:1-9, 4:17-18; 1 Cor 2:14; Rom 8:7-8, 9:16, 3:10-12; Titus 3:3; Gal 4:8-9). Thus, regeneration (re-birth) both precedes and effectively produces faith in us. God ensures the condition is met by granting faith and repentance to us. In other words, faith and repentance are themselves ***gifts*** of God and ***results*** of having received His grace

(Eph 2:8-9; Phil 1:29; 2 Tim 2:25; 2 Pet 1:1, 3; Acts 11:38, 5:31, 16:14; Heb 12:2; Rom 4:16; 1 John 5:1). Grace is not something that is earned by way of our acceptance of the gospel. It is something we receive by God's choice. In other words, grace is the reason we accept the gospel and receive Christ.

The scriptural testimony of man's spiritual state prior to regeneration is an ugly one. Drawing from a few of the verses listed above, prior to being born again, man is said to be enslaved (not free), darkened in his understanding, defiled of mind, blind and deaf (spiritually), with a mind set on the flesh and hostile to God. How could such a dead man obey the command to repent and believe? He cannot on his own. His flesh profits nothing, and it certainly does not profit the very faith by which he can be saved.

So why does Jesus command spiritually dead men to repent and believe when they are so obviously incapable? The same reason He commanded Lazarus, a physically dead man, to come forth (John 11:43). A dead man could not hear His command. He could not walk out of the grave and remove his grave clothes. He had no will to do so. That is, unless he was first made alive. And so it is with our own spiritual life. The Spirit makes us alive and we respond by coming out of the spiritual "grave" of sin. We believe and obey because God works in us to do so. Spiritual life (regeneration) precedes spiritual action (faith, repentance, good works), just as physical life (resuscitation) in Lazarus preceded his physical action (hearing, obeying, walking, breathing, etc.).

I do realize the nature of faith and repentance are not themselves the subject of this debate. But since conditionality is affirmed it must be clarified so as to not turn faith into a work. It must likewise be stated that all genuine faith— that is, faith actually produced by the Holy Spirit in our hearts— will inevitably produce good works (such as obedience to the command to be baptized). I

have already illuminated this in my first rebuttal. Thus, no accusations of this affirmation making good works insignificant are worthy of consideration. Such is not the case. Saying obedience does not **cause** our justification does not mean obedience is inconsequential. Obedience vindicates our faith as real (Spirit-wrought).

I state all this only to clarify, but I will not seek to engage this aspect of the issue. Plus, the verses cited above speak for themselves to any unbiased reader. I will instead seek to focus on the sole instrumentality of faith in our justification. Our word count is too tight to be distracted with peripheral topics. I have already engaged aspects of justification (such as Romans 4-5) since it was necessary to rebut Mr. Thrasher's addition of the work of baptism as necessary for justification. I have also already refuted Mr. Thrasher's conflation of Paul's and James' use of the term justification that so often gets brought up by those unfamiliar with this subject. So here, I will engage justification by faith alone more fully.

Remember, external water baptism = law. It is commanded in the New Covenant. Commands = law. The internal baptism by the Holy Spirit is not law; it is the work of God alone. But water baptism is a command just like any other in the New Covenant. And obedience to commands do not justify. Requiring anything in addition to faith in Jesus Christ for salvation is works-based salvation. It adds to the work of Jesus and denies salvation by Christ alone.

Perhaps no book of the Bible is clearer on justification by faith alone than Paul's letter to the Galatians. There he once again is teaching that faith and works are incompatible and alternative means to justification. In chapter two he sets up the theme that will carry through the rest of the epistle—justification is by faith and

not by works (v.16). He then begins chapter three with a series of rhetorical questions that continue the setup of works and faith as mutually exclusive means to the blessing of salvation. He asks if they received the Spirit by works of the law or by faith (v.2). Carrying that dichotomy into verse three, he classifies such works as fleshly. Then he asks if the working of miracles was done by works of the law or by faith. At this point, Paul again invokes the example of Abraham to teach the doctrine of justification by faith alone. It is of course unnecessarily redundant for him to use the word "alone" because that is his entire point. The context is to set works of the law at odds with faith. So when he tells them that it is those who have faith that are sons of Abraham (v.7), that the Gentiles are justified by faith (v.8), and those who have faith are blessed with Abraham (v.9), it would be quite silly for them to interpret such statements as leaving open the possibility that works likewise justify them. Paul is actually being more thorough than simply stating they are justified by faith alone. Instead he is explicating the entire idea methodically.

Paul next explains that if righteousness is to be pursued by the law then it must be done *in totality*. Everything written in the law must be abided in order to escape its curse. Since that cannot be done by any fallen man he states outright that no one is justified that way (v.11)— which is why they must live by faith. Then Paul makes perhaps the most powerful declaration for recognizing law and faith as two alternative means of salvation rather than partners. He writes that "the law is not of faith," quickly followed by a quote of Leviticus 18:5 that shows the works principle that was operative in the Mosaic Covenant. Obviously those works were never intended to be pursued without faith, so if the New Covenant means to justification was truly faith plus works, then that effectively means that nothing changed between the Mosaic and

New Covenant—both would be calling men to pursue right standing before God by works done in faith. That is precisely Mr. Thrasher's error.

However, a principal argument Paul is making to the Galatians is that it has indeed changed. The coming of Christ has taken us out from under the law, and the law itself serves not to save us, but to lead us to Christ. Salvation in Christ does not then merely add faith onto the law, but rather abandons the law (as a salvific measure) in favor of faith alone. Performance of the works of the law is not eradicated as a necessarily fulfillment of course, but that obedience is not required to come from us since it must be done perfectly, and thus must come from Christ. To include our works alongside faith as a means of justification in the New Covenant is to effectively argue that lesser imperfect works are now accepted as "good enough." In such case, the change from Old to New would be the fact that God (still requiring faith and works) simply lowered His standard of performance for mankind. Whereas the Old Covenant demanded perfection, the New simply asks you do your best and let Jesus cover the rest.

However, such a change in standard cannot possibly be accepted in light of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount that Christians are to be perfect (Matt 5:48), as well as the words in James 2:10 that they are to keep the whole law in order to not be law-breakers. Likewise, Paul upholds the standard of complete obedience in Galatians 3:10. If man's own law-keeping is involved in his salvation then it undoubtedly must be complete and perfect. But if that were possible then Christ's life and death were not actually needed. This is precisely what Paul is saying is not the case when he writes that if righteousness did come through the law then Christ died needlessly (Gal 2:1).

Accepting the necessity to keep one part of the law requires

one to accept the necessity of keeping the whole law. This is why Paul can tell the Galatians that accepting circumcision requires them to take on the burden of keeping the entirety of the law, and thus, they would be returning to a yoke of bondage (5:1-3). This is what he means by "falling from grace." They would no longer be seeking justification by faith alone, but instead by faith plus works. Their fall from grace would not be a losing of their justification, but rather an alternative schema of pursuit of salvation. It is one way or the other. The nature of the law is not such that it can be divided into pieces and sprinkled in as just another ingredient alongside faith. If you take any one piece of it, whether it be circumcision/baptism or any other command, then you must take it all.

Replacing circumcision with baptism (or any other act of obedience to the law) is condemned by Paul's argument in Galatians. He's dealing with circumcision, but his argument applies to any work at all that is added to faith.

Paul is so thorough on justification by faith alone that a few other passages must be mentioned. They are simply too unambiguously in favor of the doctrine to pass by. In Ephesians 2:8-9 Paul says salvation is by grace through faith—both being gifts of God. His contrast to this is expectedly works, which he rightly says would be "of yourselves" and give room for boasting. Philippians 3:9 is equally as undeniable in affirming the same teaching. There he denies having a righteousness of his own, but instead one that is through faith in Christ, coming from God on the basis of faith.

The contrasting "vehicles" to justification are clearly laid out by Paul over and over again as radically dichotomous means to salvation—it is either by faith or works. If Paul were in fact intending to teach that both are necessary for justification then it would be fair to conclude that he is one of the least clear writers in

all of religious literature. However, he is not simply telling his audience that the Jewish method of justification was by works, and now all they need to do is add more faith to it.

If righteousness is pursued by works then the entire law must be kept perfectly. Since that is impossible for fallen men to do God has established an alternative means by which they can be accounted as righteous. But it is one way or the other. They cannot be mixed. Righteousness is either one's own via perfect law-keeping (works), or it is Christ's righteousness imputed through faith. Inheritance cannot come by the law for if it did then faith is voided and God's promise is nullified (Rom 4:14). These sorts of statement make no sense unless justification is by faith alone. Each and every argument put forward by Paul collapses if indeed faith must be paired with works in order to justify.

Along with Paul explicitly teaching justification by faith alone, we can see the doctrine utilized by the disciples. When John is explaining why he has written his gospel account he simply says that it is so you might believe in Christ and by believing have life in His name (John 20:31). As with Paul, John does not include works with faith. Luke also records Paul's sermon in a synagogue at Antioch where he tells the audience that merely believing in Jesus frees anyone from that which the Mosaic Covenant could not free them from (Acts 13:38-39). Slavery was not averted through works, but only through faith. He also promised that believing in our heart and confessing with our mouth is enough to save us (Rom 10:9).

One of the more blatant teachings of justification by faith alone comes from the mouth of Jesus in His parable about the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-17). Both men go to the temple to pray, so clearly both believe in God. The Pharisee considers himself to be an upright man since he fasts twice a week and pays tithes from all of his income (good works). If he were

asked if he has faith he would undoubtedly respond, "Of course I do; I'm at the temple praying to God right now." If he were asked if he had works to show for it he would expectedly respond, "Why of course; I pay tithes and fast." Here is a man giving clear evidence of faith plus works. Yet, Jesus tells the crowd that it is not he who goes home justified, but instead the tax collector that acknowledges he has no righteousness to offer. The Pharisee was not wrong to consider his works to be good deeds; fasting and financial generosity are surely to be continued till Christ's return. However, justification is not possible when confidence is contaminated by one's own righteousness earned through works. Only a man like the tax collector that has faith in God alone can attain justification. It is not that the tax collector would lose his justification by doing good works; it is that justification is unattainable when believing good works are necessary the same way faith is.

I have hit the word limit but more evidence will be brought forward in succeeding chapters.

THRASHER'S FIRST NEGATIVE

To state that I am **disappointed** with both Mr. Guingrich's final negative and his first affirmative would be gross understatement. He has fallen far short of what I expected of him when we agreed to have this discussion. I will present several reasons for this appraisal of his efforts in this First Negative. Frequently, his statements involve perversion, distortion, and misrepresentation of my position. For example, he uses expressions such as "his hackneyed debating 'tactics,'" "his utter ignorance," "Mr. Thrasher is telling you to ... put confidence in ... your own righteousness," and that my contention "is the same false religion of the Pharisees." He misrepresents my view of Bible teaching when he claims that I believe that baptism "literally" saves. He wrote, "It is Christ who saves; not literally baptism." However, I do believe that "**it is Christ who saves.**" I do **not** believe that baptism "**literally**" saves. As I established in my affirmatives, God forgives sins **when** we **obey** him (*Hebrews 5:9*) by being baptized. I am not charging Traever with willfully lying about my positions, but that his misrepresentations result from his being wedded to Calvinistic views that hinder his ability to comprehend and evaluate my arguments.

I was disappointed that he **refused** to answer my questions, dismissing them as irrelevant to and distracting from our propositions. This isn't so! If he fails to answer those questions, I will demonstrate their relevance and his related inconsistencies. I will state them again:

1. Precisely **when** were your sins forgiven?
2. Does God desire that **every person** be forgiven?
3. Is a person required by God's revealed Truth to "**call upon**

the name of the Lord to be saved”?

4. Did God “elect” **all** of those individuals who are included in the “elect” **at the same time**? If so, what was that time?
5. **When** did the Lord **forgive** “the thief on the cross”?
6. Is it **possible** that “the thief on the cross” had been among the multitudes who went out to be baptized by John (*Matthew 3:5-6*), perhaps before he became a “thief”?
7. What Bible passage or passages say(s) that baptism is a “**sign**” that the one being baptized **has already been forgiven**?

Explaining his affirmation Traever states: “It is by **faith alone** that we *receive Christ*. This saving faith is a natural **product** of the new life that the Holy Spirit works in a spiritually dead sinner to make him alive ... **God ensures the condition is met by granting faith and repentance to us**. In other words, faith and repentance are themselves **gifts** of God and **results** of having received His grace.... Grace is ... something we receive by God’s choice” (pages 67-68; my emphasis, TNT). Traever’s position is encapsulated in this observation that faith **results** from “God’s choice,” not by man’s response to the gospel! (Although God’s word says that “**faith comes by hearing ... the word of God**” (*Romans 10:17*)! I agree with what **God** says, not what Traever says (cf. *Acts 5:29*). The position Traever espouses is consistent (although that alone does not make it true) with the comment in his biographical sketch in which he states that he **fully subscribes** to the “1689 London Baptist Confession.”¹³ I plan to make further reference to this if Traever chooses not to answer my questions.

¹³ See Traever’s biographical sketch on page 6. The *1689 London Baptist Confession* can be accessed at <https://1689londonbaptistconfession.com>.

Traever's statement (quoted above) indicates one of the fundamental issues I have with his position—it makes God guilty of **partiality** (in the worst possible way), and it also contradicts plain Bible statements about the character of God. According to my opponent's argumentation, God **chooses** not to extend His grace to many (perhaps most) people and, consequently, He withholds the means whereby they can believe, repent, and obey God. Therefore, they will be forever tormented in Hell! However, the Bible says that God is "**not willing** that **any** should perish but that **all** should come to repentance" (*2 Peter 3:9*). God has the **power** to save **all**, and He wants **all** to **come to repentance**, according to the apostle, writing as he is guided by the Holy Spirit. But Traever's contention is that God doesn't **want** all people to be saved. If He did, He could have extended His saving grace to all. Perhaps it would be helpful to emphasize this point by quoting some other English translations of *2 Peter 3:9*—

"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance**" (NASB 1995).

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance**" (NIV).

"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance**" (ESV).

Therefore, my opponent's position represents God as **not wanting** people to **repent** and **avoid perishing** because He chooses **not** to extend His grace to them to make that possible, assuring that they will be forever tormented in Hell.

Traever's position is also contradictory to Paul's contention in

Acts 17:30, "... God ... commands **all men everywhere to repent**"! But, according to Traever, God made it **impossible** for **all men everywhere** to repent because He chose not to extend His grace to them so that they by the Holy Spirit's operation can be made spiritually alive. If God had done that, then they **would have** believed and repented, but because of "God's choice" all people cannot "receive Christ." My friend confirms this conclusion by writing: "All genuine faith— that is, faith actually produced by the Holy Spirit in our hearts— will **inevitably** produce good works." If God chooses to extend His grace to any person, then that person will (without question) believe, repent, etc. According to Traever's argument, anyone who does not believe and repent can rightfully say it was because of God's choice!

Traever alleges, "Mr. Thrasher's **addition** of the work of baptism as necessary for justification." The truth is that I did not "add" anything. I cited several **passages from God's revelation** (e.g., *Acts 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:26-27, Romans 6:3-4*, and others—see my affirmatives) that confirm that water baptism is necessary to receive forgiveness and to be in Christ. My opponent admitted that these passages say that baptism is for forgiveness, stating, "I concur that his cited verses say we are 'baptized for the forgiveness of sins'" (page 52), but he repeatedly asserts that baptism is merely a "sign" of salvation. However, he fails to **prove** that view from the Bible! Perhaps he thinks that repeating his assertion often enough will make it true, but it remains just an assertion.

Traever wrote, "Ironically, one of the clearest verses that baptism is a sign is 1 Peter 3:21" (page 52). Where does this text say "baptism is a sign"? In fact, it says the opposite: "There is also an **antitype** which **now saves us—baptism** (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God),

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Baptism is not called (by Peter or by the Holy Spirit) a “**sign**” of the salvation that had already occurred, but it is called an “**antitype**.” The physical salvation (deliverance) of Noah and his family from the destructive flood was the “**sign**” or “**type**”; baptism is the “**antitype**.” I checked 62 English translations and not even one said that baptism is a “sign” of salvation! For example. “**Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you**—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (NASB 1995).

The explanatory expression “not the removal of dirt from the flesh” simply clarifies to anyone who might misunderstand why a person was being immersed in water, erroneously thinking that baptism was a “bath” to remove dirt from the body, that it had a much more noble purpose involving one’s being **saved** when God cleanses his sins through Jesus Christ (cf. *Hebrews 5:9*).

Traever misrepresents me again, saying, “Mr. Thrasher ... admits his utter ignorance of the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ.” I did no such thing! I said, “**No proof** of my opponent’s theory is found anywhere in the Bible! Traever evidently thinks it’s there, so I ask him to produce a verse from God’s inspired revelation.” In response he offered *1 Corinthians 5:21*—he apparently **meant** *2 Corinthians 5:21*, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” This verse says nothing about my friend’s theory of “the imputed righteousness of Christ”! It does refer to the atonement for our sins through Jesus Christ’s death. Note, however, that those who receive the forgiveness of their sins through the Lord’s death involves being “**in Him**”! And we are “in Him” when we are “baptized into Christ”!

Galatians 3:27, “For as many of you as were **baptized into**

Christ have put on Christ.”

Romans 6:3, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into His death?”

Without having been “baptized into Christ” one is not “in Christ,” once more showing that baptism is necessary to receive “all spiritual blessings” (*Ephesians 1:3*). Therefore, one is not “in Christ” by faith *only*. **Obedience** is necessary—Jesus is “the author of eternal salvation to all who **obey Him**” (*Hebrews 5:9*).

In my affirmative I introduced the case of the Philippian jailer (page 13), who believed and was baptized after the gospel was preached (*Acts 16:25-34*). That text shows that, after he obeyed God’s command to be baptized, “he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household” (v. 34). He was still a “believer” **after** he was baptized. Consequently, he was an **obedient** “believer”! He was **not** saved by “faith only,” but through obedience that included baptism!

Mr. Guingrich claims to have “refuted Mr. Thrasher’s conflation of Paul’s and James’ use of the term justification.” Actually, I did not “conflate” what Paul and James wrote. I explained why I believe they are not contradictory on the basis of different uses of the word “works.” Paul referred to meritorious works; that is, works that merit or earn salvation, while James refers to works that involve simply doing what God commands (as illustrated contextually by Abraham’s offering of Isaac). Thus, **two different types of “works”** are involved in the comments by Paul and James.

Although my friend rejected my simple explanation with his *ipse dixit*, he takes a similar approach by alleging two different kinds of justification. He didn’t prove that his interpretation is correct; he just asserts it to escape condemnation of his view of

“faith alone” by James’ words: “You see then that a man is **justified by works**, and **not by faith only** (*James 2:24*).

Referring to the conversion of Gentiles in *Acts 10*, Mr. Guingrich wrote: “It is a 100% undeniable fact that this group of Gentiles were all saved and received the gift of the Holy Spirit upon faith alone and only then, **after that fact**, were they baptized” (page 64). This is pure **assertion**! Actually, Peter explained what had happened after he went to Jerusalem (*Acts 11:4-18*). Peter had preached the gospel to those Gentiles. His responsibility was to “tell you [those Gentiles] **words** by which you and all your household will be saved.” Note: To be **saved** they would be told **words** by Peter. God did not say, “The Holy Spirit would come upon you so you can be saved and know that you are saved”!

The response of the audience who heard Peter’s explanation is reported by Luke: “When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles **repentance to life.**” They were not saved by the Holy Spirit’s coming upon them; they were saved through **repentance**, but not repentance only! Remember such passages as *2 Peter 3:9; Acts 17:30; 2:38*.

Traever claims, “Perhaps no book of the Bible is clearer on justification by faith alone than ... Galatians” (page 69). He contended, “Faith and works are incompatible and alternative means to justification” (page 69). Yet, Paul actually said in that letter, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but **faith working** through love” (*Galatians 5:6*). The faith that saves is the faith that works (obeys God’s commandments; *James 2:24*). When the NT refers to baptism, it is describing a faith that works (*Mark 16:16; Acts 10:34-35*)! Yes, it is **God** (by His grace) who saves, but He saves **when** we obey His

commandments (that is faith working). Many passages declare the necessity of one's obeying God's commandments. A few examples are: *Matthew 7:21; Acts 8:12, 36-38; John 14:15, 21, 23; Revelation 22:14; Hebrews 5:9.*

In his first speech (page 22), Mr. Guingrich made an argument on the use of Greek aorist participles. In my following speech (page 32) I responded to this argument by showing that this argument, when applied to the text of *Mark 16:16a*, shows that scriptural water baptism occurs **before** God grants salvation (forgiveness of sins). My friend has had four speeches since I gave a refutation of his argument, but he has ignored my point, unless I have inadvertently overlooked his response. Mr. Guingrich, what is your response to my argument? Please reply to my point.

As I conclude this speech, I again call upon Mr. Guingrich to answer my questions given in my Third Affirmative and repeated earlier in this speech. I contend they are relevant to the issues of this debate, and I will demonstrate that fact in the course of my remaining negatives. Thank you for your careful attention to this speech and the other speeches made by Traever and me. May the Lord bless us as we imitate the noble Bereans by searching the Scriptures to see whether these things are so (*Acts 17:11*).

GUINGRICH'S SECOND AFFIRMATIVE

Mr. Thrasher states he is disappointed. But if debates were conducted in an effort to prevent the “disappointment” of one’s opponent, I’m sure they would be quite worthless. Mr. Thrasher has complained of my expressions. I’m not surprised by that. I do not take his heresy lightly. Adding works to faith as necessary for salvation is a false teaching that Paul himself opposes with even stronger words than I do (see Gal 1:8-9, 5:12). Mr. Thrasher’s false teaching being addressed with a serrated edge should be the least of his concerns.

I am willing to concede that perhaps Mr. Thrasher is unaware of his “hackneyed debating tactics,” so I will explain what he is doing. He has now raised a great many questions, several of which are completely off-topic and irrelevant to the subject we are actually debating. In spite of this, I would love to answer every one. However, doing so adequately would literally take several more chapters where I focus exclusively on his questions and ignore my affirmative position. This forces me into a position of answering several of the questions in a shallow and easily refuted manner or having to ignore them entirely to stay on topic. Both choices allow Mr. Thrasher a point of attack. He can either refute my forced simplistic answers or he can accuse me of refusing to answer his questions. His willingness to engage such a poor method of debate is lamentable. Debates need to stay narrowly focused and on topic, otherwise they just turn into a hodgepodge of various topics, none of which are explored sufficiently to be beneficial to you, the reader. While Mr. Thrasher expresses his “disappointment” in me for calling this out, I am forced to say he went out of his way to give me the impression he is an experienced debater. This tactic is not the behavior of a seasoned debater. He is attempting to turn this

book into a mess of unrelated subjects far too broad to genuinely address the debate itself.

As a reminder, my affirmative is that faith is the sole instrument of justification because it is through faith alone that we rest in and receive the work of Christ. Several of the questions Mr. Thrasher has raised are regarding Reformed Theology— an entirely separate topic that would take another book’s worth of chapters to thresh out. I’ll be frank, we who hold to historic confessional Reformed theology often hear objections and questions from those that are hearing it for first time. That is understandable. However, the very questions Mr. Thrasher has asked are the same questions asked by those who are the most uninformed on the subject.¹⁴ That’s not meant to be an insult. But that fact is a clear indicator that he has not done any significant reading from the sources or from the countless pastors and theologians that have answered his questions thoroughly.

Mr. Thrasher likewise complains that I am misrepresenting his position. However, anyone reading this book is now well aware of the fact that he believes you cannot be saved unless you do the good work of being baptized. He does not believe you can be forgiven without it. According to him, ***if you don’t do it, you are not saved***. That means it literally saves you. I know he’s not saying it saves us by itself; he’s just saying it is a necessary work to be forgiven. But it is the necessary conclusion that his teaching calls us to place our trust in Christ as well as our works. That is fundamentally what Paul is denying when he teaches that we are justified by faith apart from works (Eph 2:8-9, Rom 3:28, 4:6). Mr. Thrasher has made no secret of this. He openly admits that he

¹⁴ For instance, his question about election is easily answered (see my sermon on sermonaudio.com titled: “Praise to the Father for His Election & Predestination of the Saints”)

believes we are justified by faith plus works. That means we are literally saved by Christ plus our works. In flagrant contradiction to Romans 4:5, Mr. Thrasher is teaching our obedience is part of what justifies the ungodly.

Mr. Thrasher asks “precisely when were sins forgiven?” It appears he thinks this is difficult to answer from my position. He is mistaken. All the sins of God’s people were forgiven at the cross when they were atoned for. Christ objectively accomplished this. However, we do not experience that forgiveness until the Holy Spirit applies that work of Christ to us. So we experience the forgiveness of sins once we come to faith and repent (again, both of those being fruit of the Spirit produced in us through regeneration). Mr. Thrasher needs to understand the roles of the Trinity in salvation. The Son accomplishes our redemption and the Spirit applies it. All three members of the Trinity are involved in saving us, but none of them do the same thing. It is the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who alone accomplishes our salvation. His work is how we are forgiven. Our works are not added to His work in order to be saved as Mr. Thrasher claims. Rather, the Holy Spirit applies Christ’s work to us and as a result we do good works. Works of obedience (such as baptism) are the fruit/result of being saved and it is faith alone that receives Christ for justification.

This understanding easily explains his question asking “when did the Lord forgive the thief on the cross?” Christ accomplished his forgiveness through His blood atonement when He died for the thief. Like everyone else, the thief experienced that forgiveness when the Spirit regenerated him. As a result of being saved the thief calls out to the Lord and thus receives from Him the assurance that he would be saved. All Old Testament saints receive forgiveness through Christ retroactively applied to them through faith because of God’s immutable plan of salvation. Forgiveness

can be applied to them prior to Christ accomplishing it in history because there is no possibility of Jesus failing to atone for their sins in the future. In other words, God is sovereign and He will ensure atonement is accomplished.

Mr. Thrasher likewise asks if a person must call on the name of the Lord to be saved. Again, how he thinks this is challenging to my position is a mystery. This phrasing is a clear reference to Romans 10:13. Calling on the name of the Lord is literally describing what we do when we have faith. Everyone that has faith calls on the name of the Lord to be saved. They are acknowledging that they trust the Lord to save them. It is an expression *of faith!* God is promising all those that do that will be saved; it is *descriptive* of saved people. This is an affirmation of justification by faith alone! It would seem Mr. Thrasher is attempting to turn “calling on the name of the Lord” into some sort of work that gets added to faith. This is plain silly. It is a simple description of what faith does. It is an intellectual recognition that we need to be saved coupled with a trust in Jesus to do it; that’s what calling on the Lord to be saved is.

The reader would be keen to observe that Mr. Thrasher himself cannot affirm the simple promises from Romans 10:13 or 10:9. He thinks we must calling on the Lord (faith) *and also get baptized*. It is remarkable that he raises questions such as this that deny his own position.

Mr. Thrasher also cites Romans 10:17 that says that faith comes by hearing the word of God. I’m sorry to address Mr. Thrasher with more disappointing expressions, but this shows his ignorance of basic Protestant teaching. To clarify it for him— the Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration (internal means), by which faith is produced. But the external means that the Spirit uses is the gospel being preached— which is the very context Mr. Thrasher

ignores in Romans 10. It is about the importance of preaching the gospel because that is the means God uses. The Spirit does not just zap people in their sleep or walking down the road and inject the knowledge of the gospel into their hearts. He uses means. The means by which we come to faith is the hearing of the word of God. But faith is still a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). So yes, faith is a gift and a product of grace, and it is granted to us using the preached word.

Mr. Thrasher spends much time using 2 Peter 3:9 to draw us off-topic from the subject of my affirmative. While I would sincerely love to address his flagrant mischaracterizations and obvious misunderstandings, I simply do not have that luxury. However, you can easily find my teaching on that precise question online.¹⁵ You will find that his question, like the others, is not at all difficult to answer and the simple context explains his objection quite easily. Contrary to Mr. Thrasher's false claims, there is no denial of the universal command for all men to repent nor does God "make it impossible" for anyone to repent. Sadly, Mr. Thrasher is exposing more of his ignorance in these claims. Unfortunately, we do not have space to fully expose that here.

Mr. Thrasher claims he does not add the work of baptism as necessary for justification, all the while he argues that the work of baptism must be done in order to be forgiven. This is what is called a distinction without a difference. If you cannot be forgiven without baptism (as he claims), then it is a necessary addition to faith for justification. This is not complicated. If one cannot be justified without baptism, then it is an additional work that is necessary. I will leave it to the readers to easily see through this level of

¹⁵ Simply search my name (Traever Guingrich) online for my sermon on 2 Pet 3:8-9 titled: "Does God 'Want' Everyone to be Saved? The Prescriptive & Decretive Will of God." It can be found on sermonaudio.com.

argumentation.

Mr. Thrasher has opposition to the idea that baptism is a sign of our forgiveness through Christ. I again wish I could write far longer on baptism and 1 Pet 3:21.¹⁶ He commits the word-concept fallacy when he states that he looked for the word “sign” in various English translations of the Bible and since he couldn’t find baptism being called a sign then it must not be a sign. I hope he does not attempt this low level of defense when it comes to the Trinity, because he will likewise fail to find that word in the Bible either. It appears Mr. Thrasher thinks the absence of a particular word means that the concept behind that word is also absent. But the word Trinity is used to describe the biblical teaching of God. We don’t need the presence of that exact word to affirm the concept behind it. The same is true of both sacraments as signs. Baptism doesn’t need to literally be called a sign in our English translations in order for us to observe that is what baptism is. We likewise don’t need the Lord’s Supper to be called a sign for us to know that the bread is not literally Christ’s body and the wine is not literally His blood. However, if we were to adopt Mr. Thrasher’s hermeneutic then we would all need to affirm the heresy of transubstantiation. Such false teaching denies that the Lord’s Supper is a sign and Christ’s words (“this is my body” and “this is my blood”) are to be taken literally. I will again leave it to the reader to recognize that is exactly what Mr. Thrasher is doing by taking the phrase “for the forgiveness of sins” as literal when it is actually speaking of what the sign of baptism symbolizes.

As I have already stated, Scripture comprehensively treats baptism as a sign. Insisting on the word “sign” to “prove” this is a

¹⁶ My sermon giving a fuller explanation to 1 Peter 3:21 and baptism as a sign by searching for my sermon titled: “Baptism Now Saves You?” It can be found on sermon audio.

common fallacy found among those with a fundamental inability to interpret Scripture rightly. Think of it this way; Scripture never literally says: “sin is incredibly serious.” However, any capable reader can see that sin is comprehensively treated in Scripture as incredibly serious.

Just as in the Lord’s Supper, it is not difficult to recognize the symbolism in baptism. As we are immersed in the water it symbolizes our old sinful man being put to death and buried with Christ as He was put in the ground after He died while bearing our sins. As we come out of the water it symbolizes rising again as a born again new man as Christ was raised from the dead. In addition to symbolizing death (such as the flood waters to the world and the Red Sea to Pharaoh and his army), the water also symbolizes a cleansing of our sins. Physical water can wash away physical dirt, but it cannot wash away spiritual sin. Washing away sin is an internal spiritual problem that must be fixed by a spiritual act— the Spirit applying Christ’s blood atonement to us. Anyone with a basic understanding of biblical interpretation can see that baptism symbolizes these things. That’s what signs do— they symbolize. The Lord’s Supper is a sign of the death of Christ because it symbolizes His broken body and shed blood. It is not difficult for even a child to recognize how red wine symbolizes His blood. Baptism is a sign for the forgiveness of sins because it symbolizes cleansing and union with Christ in His death and resurrection. It cannot get more straightforward than that. The inconsistency of Mr. Thrasher to recognize both sacraments as signs proves his failed argument. Take note of the fact he has never attempted to explain how the Lord’s Supper is not a sign but still should not to be taken literally the way he does with baptism.

Mr. Thrasher again objects to imputed righteousness. He does not actually present an argument against my citation of 2

Corinthians 5:21. Instead, he simply says it does not teach it, yet offers zero exegesis of the passage. That is not an argument; it is an empty claim. If he thinks we “become the righteousness of God” without Christ’s righteousness being imputed to us through faith, then his error is even more serious than I realized. Note that the verse also states that God made Jesus “to be sin on our behalf.” You know how He was sin for us? By way of imputation! He wasn’t literally turned into a sinner in His nature. Instead, He was credited as a sinner so He could bear the curse of sin for us (death). Likewise, that is how we become the righteousness of God. We do not literally become perfectly righteous. Instead, His perfect righteousness is imputed/credited to us. It is a “double exchange” and both our sin and His righteousness are exchanged by way of imputation. This is what it means to have righteousness credited to us. It is the same word (credited, imputed, counted). Paul teaches it explicitly in Romans 4:3, 5, 9, and 22.

Notice as well that Mr. Thrasher did not even attempt to refute the overwhelmingly obvious teaching of imputed righteousness from Philippians 3:2-11. There Paul thoroughly and explicitly teaches the very doctrine Mr. Thrasher denies. His avoidance of it is a reflection of his inability to refute its clear teaching. Paul could not make it any clearer than he does in v.9: not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Phil 3:9).

Mr. Thrasher’s citation of the Philippian jailer proves absolutely nothing in regard to his position. He believed, was baptized, and rejoiced. Nothing in that text speaks about the technical issue of justification by faith alone, nor does it even begin to imply the jailer was not saved until after his baptism. However, my citation of Acts 10:34-48 does directly contradict Mr. Thrasher’s

position. He cites the fact that Peter was instructed to preach “words” to the Gentiles by which they would be saved. Well of course. Like I have already affirmed, the preached gospel (the words) are the external means by which we come to faith. The Spirit’s regenerating work is the internal means. I beg of the reader to read that passage in its entirety. Anyone can see they were saved by faith alone. We see them believe after hearing the preaching (they come to faith) and according to Peter himself the Holy Spirit was “poured out” on them. They are saved! They are justified and forgiven! The Holy Spirit does not get poured out on the unsaved/unforgiven! Then after salvation has come to them, they go get baptized. Mr. Thrasher’s position simply cannot stand in light of what we see in Acts 10. Ironically, he cites Peter saying the gentiles were **granted** repentance, yet he affirms that as a work rather than a gift of the Spirit.

I want to respond the grammatical argument from Mark 16:16 in spite of its questionable originality.¹⁷ That passage is descriptive not prescriptive. That is, it is describing those that will be saved, not giving a technical prescription on how they get saved.

Lastly, Mr. Thrasher’s treatment of James 2 is completely fallacious. The concept he uses of “two different types of works” is entirely invented simply to deny Paul’s clear teaching of justification by faith alone. No biblical author makes this distinction; he just made it up! I did not allege two different “kinds” of justification. I explained the semantic range/domain of the word and proved it by citing Christ’s own use in the non-forensic sense. He says in Luke 7:35 that wisdom is vindicated/justified by her

¹⁷ There is no way to properly engage the question of the longer ending of Mark (16:9-20) which was added by later scribes. Engaging that issue here is about as off-topic as we could possibly get. It raises the question of textual criticism. Drawing from this text, which did not actually come from the pen of Mark, is not a valid argument.

children. This is the same word used by Paul and James when they write on “justification.” It can be used to mean vindicate such as Jesus does in Luke 7:35 and how James 2 speaks of Abraham’s obedience. Or it can be used to mean right legal/forensic standing before God as Paul speaks about it. The English word “justification” retains this same semantic range and thus can be used to mean either one. We know James is using it in the non-forensic sense because he says Abraham wasn’t justified until he offered Isaac. But Paul already taught that Abraham was forensically justified years prior when he believed God’s promises (faith alone). The difference between Paul and James rests in their use of the word “justification,” not in their use of “works.” Any work that must be performed in order to be saved is a meritorious work.

Works vindicate because they are observable. Faith is not. It is internal and spiritual. Works can thus be cited as proof to genuine faith. James’ concern is about the **type** of faith one is professing (see Jam 2:14). If one claims faith yet doesn’t have works then that sort of faith will not save— not because works must be added, but because it is a false non-saving faith. How does James know that? Because real faith from the Spirit does good works. But as Paul taught, we are justified by faith apart from works (Eph 2:8-9, Rom 3:28, 4:6). Mr. Thrasher claims there are two different kinds of works— works that earn salvation and works doing God’s commands. Yet he claims that doing God’s commands are necessary for salvation. If they must be performed by us in order to be saved then they by definition earn salvation! This is no different than those in the early church claiming we must be circumcised in order to be saved. Apparently, Mr. Thrasher thinks they simply chose the wrong command to add to faith. Galatians was written to explain that **no work** can be added to faith— whether it be circumcision, baptism, or any act of obedience. Works are acts of

obedience that we do because we are saved. They prove our faith is real. Anyone without works is not saved— not because of their failure to work, but because their faith is demonstrably false. Faith alone justifies, and real faith works.

I will simply leave you with Paul's own words that irrefutably deny Mr. Thrasher's position— But to the one ***who does not work***, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness (Rom 4:5).

THRASHER'S SECOND NEGATIVE

Mr. Guingrich, I also am not “surprised” by your tactics, since my interactions with numerous debate opponents throughout 52 years (including several Calvinistic Baptists) have taught me to expect such behavior. While Traever’s statements do not **surprise** me, I was nevertheless “disappointed” because I had **hoped** that he would be more willing to accept truth than most of those whom I have debated.

In the final paragraph of his speech, Traever claimed that Paul’s statement in *Romans 4:5* refutes my position: “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.” Paul did not write that “faith **only**” justifies! That interpretation contradicts *James 2:24*, “You see then that a man is **justified by works**, and **not by faith only**.” Although my opponent refuses to accept what James wrote, what James wrote is still true! Jesus said (*John 6:29*) “This is the **work** of God, that **you believe in Him** whom He sent.” I do **not** deny that **faith** is necessary (see my affirmation), but I deny that we are justified by “faith **only**” (*James 2:24*)! We are required to **obey** God (*Hebrews 5:9*); **do His will** (*Matthew 7:21*); and **keep His commandments** (*Revelation 22:14*). Does Traever believe we **must do that**? Furthermore, we’ll be **judged** according to our **works** (*Revelation 20:12-13*; *Matthew 16:27* ; *2 Corinthians 11:15*).

Traever said, “Several of the questions Mr. Thrasher has raised are regarding Reformed Theology—an entirely separate topic.” If so, are his references to “**transubstantiation**,” the **Lord’s supper**, and the **Trinity**, among others he has introduced “entirely separate topics”? Why did Traever ask me questions about such matters if he is so concerned about my allegedly getting “off topic”?

Traever said, “Mr. Thrasher ... openly admits that he believes we are justified by faith plus works.” Since Traever has contended many times that one is justified by “faith **alone**,” then he should believe that every person must do one **work (believing)** to be justified (see *John 6:29*)! Interestingly, *John 12:42* describes some “**believers**”: “Nevertheless even among the rulers many **believed in Him**, but because of the Pharisees they **did not confess Him**, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.” Clearly, one is not justified by “faith alone,” as my opponent affirms.

Mr. Guingrich charges that I take “the phrase ‘for the forgiveness of sins’ as literal when it is actually speaking of what **the sign of baptism symbolizes**.” However, Saul of Tarsus was told: “**Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord**” (*Acts 22:16*). Note that “calling on the name of the Lord” included his **being baptized** and his sins being “washed away”! The Bible doesn’t remotely suggest that baptism was just a “sign” that his sins were already washed away!

Traever says, “Baptism is a sign for the forgiveness of sins because it symbolizes cleansing and union with Christ in His death and resurrection. ... he has never attempted to explain how the Lord’s Supper is not a sign but still should not to [*sic*] be taken literally the way he does with baptism.” In the Lord’s supper, Jesus said, “This do in remembrance of me” (*1 Corinthians 11:23-25*). The Lord’s Supper is said to be a memorial involving eating **bread** and drinking **the fruit of the vine**. Obviously, when partaking of these items, one is not literally eating the body of Jesus and drinking His blood. When Jesus instituted this observance with His apostles (*Matthew 26; Mark 14, Luke 22, 1 Corinthians 11*), He was right there in their presence—clearly, they were not literally “eating His body” and “drinking His blood” (which would have been a violation of such passages as *Acts 15:28-29*). No such language is used in

teaching that **water baptism is a sign of forgiveness already received.**

Traever says, “I want to respond to the grammatical argument from Mark 16:16 in spite of its questionable originality.” He did not actually **respond** to “the grammatical argument from Mark 16:16,” which he has ignored since he made it in his First Negative speech (page 20). He originally made his argument concerning the time of an aorist participle, writing, “The action of justification is communicated with a passive adverbial **participle in the aorist tense**, which communicates both that the act of justification is **prior to** the main verb ... and it is **an act done to the subject by another.**” I applied his argument to the proposition I was affirming (in my following speech, my Second Affirmative). I will now expand my response to his argument.

In *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (1923), J. Gresham Machen stated: “... the tense of the participle is relative to the time of the leading verb, the **aorist participle denotes action prior to the action denoted by the leading verb**, whether the action denoted by the leading verb is past, present or future” (pp. 116-117).

In *Essentials of New Testament Greek* (1950), Ray Summers explained: “In *tense* the participle has to do with *kind* of action.... The **time of action** in participles is **indicated in the** relation of the action of the participle to the action of the main verb.... The **aorist participle** indicates **action which is antecedent to the action of the main verb**” (p. 89).

A New Short Grammar of the Greek Testament (10th Edition, 1977) by A. T. Robertson and W. Hersey Davis: “The aorist participle is never used for subsequent action. No such example has ever been found ...” (pp. 379-380).

A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (1934) by A. T. Robertson: “**Antecedent Action**.... This is indeed **the most common use of the aorist participle**.... **Subsequent Action not Expressed by the Aorist Participle**. Some writers have held this as possible, though no satisfactory examples have been adduced” (pp. 860-861).

Many other examples could be cited from Greek grammarians and lexicographers, but surely these examples are sufficient to convince honest Bible students. The grammarians/lexicographers are mostly Baptists or others who do **not** teach that water baptism is necessary for salvation (or remission of alien sins).

Now apply these principles of Greek grammar to *Mark 16:16a*. Although several other arguments that have been proffered as nullifying *Mark 16* as supporting the necessity of baptism as a condition of salvation by the grace of God, those arguments will not be addressed now. Instead, I will focus on this point of Greek grammar **introduced by Mr. Guingrich in his first speech of this debate** and ignored ever since my reply in my Second Affirmative.

According to *The Interlinear Literal Translation of The Greek New Testament* (1952, p. 145), commonly called *Berry's Interlinear*, by George Ricker Berry, and *The Zondervan Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* (1975, p. 161), the Greek text of *Mark 16:16a* reads: ὁ πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς . In English letters, this is: *ho pisteusas kai baptistheis sothesetai* (“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”) The words πιστεύσας and βαπτισθεὶς are **aorist participles** (*The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, Zondervan, 1970, pp. 326 and 65). The main verb is σωθήσεται (“will be saved”). Who “will be saved”? The one who **believes** and **is baptized**. As already argued by Traever in his First Negative, an aorist participle is used to refer to time **antecedent** to the action of the main verb, **never subsequent** to the action of the main verb! Therefore, the **actions**

of believing and **being baptized** are **never AFTER** the person is saved, although my friend has asserted that repeatedly regarding baptism!

Traever also stated in his footnote (concerning *Mark 16:16*), “Drawing from this text, which did not actually come from the pen of Mark, is not a valid argument.” I introduced *Mark 16:16* in my First Affirmative, yet Traever doesn’t venture this response, seeking to undermine its validity until his Second Negative (eight speeches later!). His approach of questioning the originality of *Mark 16:9-20* has been thoroughly refuted numerous times, as my opponent ought to be aware.

For example, John Burgon wrote a book, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*¹⁸ (originally published in 1871) refuting the error of Traever’s claim. Famous Baptist debater L. S. Ballard made the same baseless assertion on *Mark 16:9-20* as Traever does. Thomas Warren thoroughly exposed this argument in their 1952 debate.¹⁹ Both of these may be accessed online. If Traever clings to his assertion questioning the validity of *Mark 16:9-20*, I will take the space to summarize several compelling reasons for accepting the genuineness of the text.

Traever asserts that I claim that “doing God’s commands are necessary for salvation.” However, I didn’t merely “claim” that, I demonstrated it by Bible statements. The real issue is **when** does God grant forgiveness of sins! I cited cases of God’s blessings

¹⁸ John William Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*. Oxford and London: James Parker and Co., 1871. Accessible: [The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark \(gutenberg.org\)](http://www.gutenberg.org).

¹⁹ Thomas B. Warren and L. S. Ballard, *Warren-Ballard Debate*. Longview, WA: Telegram Book Company, 1953. Accessible: [Warren-BallardDebate.pdf \(icotb.org\)](http://www.icotb.org).

received in *2 Kings 5* and *Joshua 6*.

Traever's thesis is inseparably connected to his claims regarding the "imputed righteousness of Christ." The transferring of sins and righteousness is part of **Calvinistic thinking** about man's inheriting the sin of Adam. Being totally corrupted by sin in flesh and spirit, man needs the perfect righteousness of Christ to be transferred to himself in order to be righteous before God. The primary failure in such thinking is that the Bible does not teach this. The Scriptures teach us that sin entered into the world through Adam's transgression (*Romans 5:12*), but it does not claim that all men were guilty **because of** Adam's sin being **inherited**. All men were separated from God "because all sinned" (*Romans 5:12*). "They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable" (*Romans 3:12*). If man follows the steps of Abraham in being justified by an obedient faith and not by works of law, he will have his obedient faith reckoned unto him for righteousness. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (*Romans 4:3*). Notice, it is one's own faith that is put to one's account for righteousness, **not the perfect life or righteousness of Christ!** Christ's death and resurrection are the basis for one's being counted righteous, and faith is the means. "Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification." (*Romans 4:23-25*). The Scriptures teach justification is by faith, but not Traever's **theory of faith alone**. Such a theory restricts justification by faith to the simple trust in Jesus as Savior, excluding other actions of faith involved in justification from sin. For example, Paul reminds us not only is believing Jesus was raised from the dead necessary to being saved, but confessing that Jesus

is Lord is necessary for salvation. “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (*Romans 10:10*). The Bible teaches us that sin entered the world through Adam (*Romans 5:12*), but it does not teach that all men were guilty **because of Adam’s sin being inherited**. All men were separated from God “because all sinned” (*Romans 5:12*). If man follows the steps of Abraham in being justified by faith and not by works of law, he will have his faith accounted to ` righteousness. “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness” (*Romans 4:3*). Notice, it is one’s faith (**an obedient faith**) that is applied to one’s account for righteousness, not the perfect life or righteousness of Christ. Christ’s death and resurrection is the basis for one being righteous, and faith (**not faith alone!**) is the means.

In my Third Affirmative speech, I asked Mr. Guingrich seven questions. Since he did not attempt to answer them, I asked them again in my First Negative. Since one of his stated reasons for not answering them was that he did not have enough space, I agreed to allow him an **extra thousand words** so he could provide answers. Although he used those words, and a few more, he still did not attempt answers to all seven, complaining that several of them “are completely off topic and irrelevant to the subject.” I repeat those questions below with some observations.

1. Precisely when were your sins forgiven? Traever fails to tell us when **his** sins were forgiven, but he wrote, “**All** the sins of God’s people were **forgiven at the cross** when they were atoned for. Christ objectively accomplished this. However, we do not experience that forgiveness until the Holy Spirit applies that work of Christ to us. So we **experience** the forgiveness of sins once we come to **faith** and **repent** (again, **both of those being fruit of the Spirit produced in us through regeneration**).” How, then, can any

person be forgiven? Only by the Spirit's **producing** faith and repentance through regeneration. The Calvinistic view is that there are many people for whom God does **not choose** to make that possible—He **chooses not** to regenerate them. However, remember *2 Peter 3:9; Mark 16:15; Acts 17:30; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2*.

2. Does God desire that every person be forgiven? I did not find where Traever answered this question. "Yes" or "no" is sufficient!

3. Is a person required by God's revealed Truth to "call upon the name of the Lord to be saved"? Traever responds, "Calling on the name of the Lord is literally describing what we do when we have faith. Everyone that has faith calls on the name of the Lord to be saved. ... This is an affirmation of justification by faith alone!" Please note again my earlier reference to Saul's case in *Acts 22:16*. Saul's **being baptized** was involved in his "calling on the name of the Lord!"

Concerning *Romans 10:13*, Paul wrote: "For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." I believe that completely. However, Paul shows that **believing is NOT "calling on the name of the Lord"** (*verse 14*)—"How then shall they **call on Him** in whom they have not **believed**?" One cannot "**call on the name of the Lord**" unless he has already **believed**! As the earlier quotation from Traever indicates, **he thinks** that "calling on the Lord" **equals** "faith" (which is contrary to what Paul wrote)!

4. Did God "elect" all of those individuals who are included in the "elect" at the same time? If so, what was that time? Unless I missed it, Traever failed to address this question. "Yes" or "No" would have been appropriate!

5. When did the Lord forgive "the thief on the cross"? Traever

answers, “Christ accomplished his forgiveness through His blood atonement when He died for the thief.” So, according to Traever, the former thief was forgiven when the Lord died! I teach that this man was forgiven! However, this was **before the new testament** of Jesus came into effect (*Hebrews 9:16-17*). Water baptism in the name of Jesus (**the baptism of the new covenant**) was **not** in effect at that time.

6. Is it possible that “the thief on the cross” had been among the multitudes who went out to be baptized by John (Matthew 3:5-6), perhaps before he became a “thief”? This is surely relevant to our debate, since **Traever claimed, without scriptural proof**, that “the thief on the cross” was **not baptized** (page 21).

Actually, Traever’s **assertion** that the repentant “thief” was not baptized is irrelevant to the requirements of the new covenant. Nevertheless, my friend did not prove from the Bible that the thief had **not been baptized**, although he wrote: “Yet we **know for a fact** he was saved **without a personal baptism**” (page 37). How did he **know** that the “thief” had not been baptized? Discovering my friend’s reasoning on that was the motivation for Question #6.

7. What Bible passage or passages say(s) that baptism is a “sign” that the one being baptized has already been forgiven? Although Traever discussed his theory that baptism is a “**sign**” of **forgiveness already received**, he did not quote any **scripture** that says that baptism is a sign of forgiveness already received. I suppose that he wants (and expects) us to take his word for that theory. I cited *Romans 6* showing scriptural water baptism “pictures” the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus: “For if we have been united together in the **likeness of His death**, certainly we also shall be **in the likeness of His resurrection**, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of

sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. **Likewise** you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*Romans 6:5-10*). Later in that chapter Paul wrote, “But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet **you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine** to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (verses 17-18) . However, that is **not** what Traever argued when he asserted that baptism is a “sign” of forgiveness previously obtained.

In *Genesis 9:8-17* we find reference to the covenant God made that He would never again send a universal flood to destroy the earth. God gave a “sign” of that covenant: “And God said: “This *is* **the sign** of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.” How do I know that the rainbow was “**the sign of the covenant**”? God’s word declares it!

In *Genesis 17:9-14* God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants involving fleshly circumcision. In verse 11 God said, “you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be **a sign of the covenant** between Me and you. you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and **it shall be a sign of the covenant** between Me and you.” Circumcision was a “sign of the covenant”! How do we **know** that? **God plainly declared that fact!** We are not left to assume or guess or speculate on that sign! Did Traever cite any Bible passage that says what he claims about

baptism's being a "sign" that one has already been forgiven/saved? Emphatically "NO!" He expects us to reject plain statements such as I have previously quoted on the design of baptism. For example,

Acts 2:38—"... Repent, and **let every one of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**"! Note: **NOT** as a **sign** that sins have already been forgiven!

Acts 22:16—"... Arise and **be baptized**, and **wash away your sins**, calling on the name of the Lord"! Note: **NOT** as a **sign** that your sins have already been washed away!

Romans 6:3-4—"Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ** Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Note: **NOT** as a **sign** that one is already "in Christ" before baptism!

Galatians 3:26-27—"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ"! **NOT** baptism is a **sign** that you are already "in Christ"!

Traever charges. "He went out of his way to give me the impression he is an experienced debater." However, I had no **intention** of giving any **impression** that I am a "seasoned debater," but I factually stated that I had participated, when this debate began, in 110 formal religious debates. My participation in those efforts was simply "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (*Jude 3*) and to be "appointed for the defense of the gospel" (*Philippians 1:17*). My purpose for this debate is not personal recognition but to teach faithfully God's revealed word.

GUINGRICH'S THIRD AFFIRMATIVE

One of Mr. Thrasher's repeated errors is to take individual phrases out of context and read them in isolation from the rest of biblical teaching. He does this to such a degree that he quotes verses in his defense that come from passages that contradict the very point he is making.

Mr. Thrasher quotes John 6:29 in his defense, but in John 6:29 Jesus tells His listeners that it is **God's** work that we believe. This is denied by Mr. Thrasher. In fact, later in his own rebuttal he calls faith our own work. The reality is that John 6:29 supports the claim I have already made—God works faith in us; it is a gift we receive, and then exercise ourselves.

He likewise cites John 12:42 which speaks of rulers that believed in Jesus but did not confess him. Mr. Thrasher thinks this denies justification by faith alone. It in fact does no such thing. Obviously saving faith includes **trusting in** Christ, which the rulers mentioned in the verse did not do. All they did was believe in the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. But even the devil and the demons know that fact to be true (Jam 2:19, Mark 1:24). That is not saving faith. So mere intellectual assent is not saving faith that justifies. Pharisees that recognize that Jesus is divine have no more faith than the demons. The faith of believers is substantially different because it includes trusting Jesus to save them. That is the faith that alone justifies.

Mr. Thrasher revisits the issue of the thief on the cross and seeks to disqualify him from consideration since Jesus had not yet died. What he fails to realize is that baptism had **already been instituted** for believers prior to Christ's crucifixion. So yes it is relevant that the thief on the cross was saved without baptism. We

can see the same reality in Luke 7:47-50. There, the sinful woman who wiped Christ's feet was told that her sins were *forgiven* (v.48), and that her *faith* had saved her (v.50). This is yet another instance where there is clear forgiveness of sins and salvation through faith alone. Mr. Thrasher's teaching collapses in the face of such texts. She did not need to get baptized for her sins to be forgiven (though she surely went to be baptized at some point after). She did not need to do any works to get saved because she was already saved by her faith (though she surely did works after).

I am seriously amazed that Mr. Thrasher can entirely miss the point when I have brought up the Trinity and transubstantiation. Perhaps this is intentional so that he would not have to answer the arguments that expose his inconsistency and errors. These doctrines were not brought up to discuss them as separate topics. Simply put, Mr. Thrasher has demanded that baptism be referred to as a sign using the literal word, as opposed to the concept being comprehensively demonstrated (which it is, as I have shown). However, he is willing to affirm the Trinity without the literal word being used because that doctrine is comprehensively demonstrated. Thus, baptism does not need to be called a "sign" for the Bible to teach that it is indeed a sign (same goes for the Lord's Supper).

A similar inconsistency in his hermeneutic can be seen in the fact that he does not affirm that the bread and wine are literally the body and blood of Jesus. Jesus says that's what they are and does not say they are "signs" of His body and blood. Yet all Christians recognize that is what they are—they *symbolize* His body and blood—the Lord's Supper is likewise a sign. Mr. Thrasher insists on taking baptism as being literally for the forgiveness of sins, but inconsistently does not take the Lord's Supper literally. The reality is that both the Lord's Supper and baptism are referring

to things they symbolize; they are both signs. Again, Mr. Thrasher is inconsistent in his interpretation of Scripture, which demonstrates his error. If he were consistent and honest then he would deny the Trinity because the word is never used in Scripture. He would likewise have to deny the Lord's Supper symbolizes the body and blood of Jesus as a memorial, and would take them literally. He does neither of those things, and thus his error is exposed.

Mr. Thrasher cites passages regarding judgment according to our works. He is confusedly collapsing two different ideas. We do get rewarded according to our works (Matt 10:42, Luke 19:17, 2 Tim 4:7-8) when we are before the judgment seat of God (2 Cor 5:10, Rom 14:10). But that is not how we are saved. The gift of salvation is free; it is by grace. All believers inherit the same eternal life no matter if they worked for decades or if they were saved on their death bed (see the parable of the vineyard workers, Matt 20:1-16). Everyone becomes heirs of the promises by faith alone (Rom 4:13). To enter eternal life the law must be kept perfectly, and every believer has Christ's perfection imputed to them by faith. Thus, they all are counted as (equally) righteous and are citizens of the Kingdom of God. Entrance to heaven (salvation) is by perfect law keeping. We have that by Christ's imputed righteousness. Rewards will then be received by all believers according to their works. These are two very different judgments. I implore Mr. Thrasher to abandon his own works as being capable of justifying him. When you face God in judgment, do not present your own religious resume. Please, only plead the merits of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Thrasher errs greatly when he implies imputed righteousness is exclusive to the Reformed faith. This is blatantly false. In reality, imputed righteousness is the widespread common understanding of the gospel, denied only by heterodox false sects.

It is not the depravity of man that causes the need for an imputed righteousness as Mr. Thrasher falsely implies; it is the holiness of God and His law that must be upheld.

All of Mr. Thrasher's arguments against the universal Christian doctrine of original sin are absolutely meaningless in refuting the need for Christ's righteousness being imputed to us in order to merit eternal life. Original sin has nothing to do with meriting salvation through the law. I'm legitimately shocked at how much he does not actually understand the historic and apostolic position he is arguing against. He is denying the federal headship of Adam. If he denies the federal headship of the 1st Adam then he must deny the federal headship of the 2nd Adam—Christ (1 Cor 15:45-47. Rom 5:14). This puts him even farther outside the boundaries of historic orthodoxy. It seems there are not many historic apostolic universal Christian doctrines that do not fall prey to Mr. Thrasher's aberrant interpretations.

Once again Mr. Thrasher quotes Romans 10:9-10, therefore I must point out once again—his own teaching denies! Paul says there that we are saved by believing. The faith is ***the type of faith*** that confesses. It is not the literal physical act of confessing that must be added in order to save us; it is the faith alone. So yes, even those born mute can be saved in spite of their inability to confess with their mouth. But the larger point is that Mr. Thrasher ***cannot affirm this passage!*** Paul promises salvation without baptism. Mr. Thrasher denies this possibility! I can wholeheartedly affirm it since I know the truth that baptism is what saved people do; not what we do to get saved (as we see literally happen in Acts 10:34-48).

Hebrews 5:9 and Matthew 7:21 are both cited by Mr. Thrasher as evidence that works justify. But neither one says we obey to get saved. It says that is it those who obey that are saved. That is a massive difference. Of course it is those that obey that are saved.

Obedience is a distinct mark of those who have been saved. Like I have repeated from the beginning—we are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Those saved by faith do good works. Both passages are **descriptive** of the saved. They are not **prescribing** how to get saved. The difference between descriptive and prescriptive texts is an elementary fundamental principle that Mr. Thrasher constantly ignores, and it causes him to make a mess of the biblical message.

This same hermeneutical principle applies to Mark 16:16 where Mr. Thrasher has spent so much time speaking about the grammar. The grammar has nothing to do with a phrase being descriptive or prescriptive. So all his attention to the grammar is pointless in this case. Besides, all his grammatical arguments simply reinforce my original point about Romans 5:1 proving justification by faith alone, where the grammatical argument does actually apply.

I've very intentionally not spent time discussing the originality of Mark 16:9-20 because it is so far from the point of this book. If Mr. Thrasher had done his homework then he would be well aware of the conservative scholarship that recognizes it as an inauthentic addition to the biblical text. Even the early church documented this reality. More recent manuscript and papyri discoveries have undermined the arguments in older outdated works like the ones cited by Mr. Thrasher. Plus, both the internal evidence and the more up to date external evidence (the manuscripts themselves) reveal the longer ending of Mark to be a later addition to the original biblical text. Mr. Thrasher would hate to admit this reality because his argument is so dependent on misinterpreting Mark 16:16 as prescriptive rather than descriptive. The grammar can't prove that distinction anyway. If he wants to waste his time arguing

his dubious claim about textual criticism²⁰ in a book on salvation then that is his prerogative.

Given these misinterpretations by Mr. Thrasher, his question does not make sense when he asks if I believe we must obey to be saved. The answer is, to get saved—no, we do not work; salvation is by grace. But if we are saved, then yes, we will necessarily do good works. No one is saved **without** good works, but no one is saved **BY** their good works. I am on the side of Paul who says we are justified by faith apart from works. Mr. Thrasher is on the side of Paul's opponents who claim works must be added to faith in order for anyone to be saved.

Think of it this way... does an apple tree have to bear apples in order to be an apple tree? No, of course not. An apple tree is what it is by nature. The apples don't need to be added in order for it to become an apple tree. But apple trees bear apples because that is what they are; it is in their nature to bear apples. So all apple trees bear apples—apples are the necessary **result** of the apple tree. In the same way, we do not bear the fruit of good works to get saved. We are saved by the work of God. As a **result** though, we bear the fruit of good works. So all saved people bear good fruit. But that fruit is not necessary in order to save us. Being saved is prior to bearing fruit. Bearing fruit is a necessary result of being saved. So, works are **not** the necessary **cause** of salvation as Mr. Thrasher claims. They are the necessary **result**. God was not making a mistake when He used the analogy of fruit for our works. Making works a cause of salvation is heresy. Recognizing them as a fruit is the simple gospel.

²⁰ If the reader is interested in recent conservative scholarship on the issue of Mark 16:9-20 and textual criticism in general then I would recommend Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* and James White, *The King James Only Controversy*.

One of the more outrageous errors Mr. Thrasher makes is that he actually said that believing is a work. According to him, “every person must do one work (believing).” Works and faith are always held out as separate and distinct acts by the biblical writers. Faith is set ***in opposition to works*** (Rom 4:4-5, Gal 2:16, Rom 9:31-32). Faith is resting and receiving Christ. It is not a work we do. It is the necessary result of a changed nature (being born again). Faith is an open hand by which we receive and take hold of Christ. If a starving beggar is handed bread by a rich man, he has done no work. Faith is like a beggar that receives the riches of Christ from our gracious God. ***Faith is not a work.***

Mr. Thrasher also completely contradicts himself by then affirming faith as “the means” for “one’s being counted righteous.” But then he returns to his errors by saying that it is faith itself that is counted as righteousness. That is more than a mere means. If faith itself were the righteousness that justifies us then our justification would be based on what we do, and we would have something to boast about. We would be doing the necessary thing to get saved; i.e. working for it. This is a complete and total denial of salvation by grace! Mr. Thrasher’s teaching is man saving himself by his actions—just like every false gospel and every false religion man has ever invented.

Romans 4:3 is speaking of faith as a ***means*** to imputed righteousness—a righteousness counted to us. Faith is “unto” or “to” (the “end” or “goal of”) righteousness. It is not at all saying that faith itself is what counts as our righteousness. Mr. Thrasher previously said that faith is a work. But in Romans 4:2 Paul explicitly denies faith is a work. He says that ***if Abraham were*** justified by works then he would have something to boast about. Well, he was justified by faith, which Mr. Thrasher says is a work. Therefore, according to Mr. Thrasher, Abraham has something to boast

about—his own work of faith that justified him. Notice how Paul in Romans 4:1-5 flatly contradicts Mr. Thrasher’s entire conception of faith and justification. Mr. Thrasher called faith a work and says it justifies us. Paul says that we are justified by faith **as opposed to works** so that salvation would be by grace (Rom 4:16). This is fundamentally, conceptually, and comprehensively incompatible with what Mr. Thrasher has written.

Adding works to justification is a denial of salvation by grace. Calling faith a work is a denial of salvation by grace. Calling faith a work subverts all of Paul’s argumentation about salvation and justification in Romans 4-5. Mr. Thrasher’s teaching is outrageously contradictory to the Apostle Paul!

The truth is, faith is an instrument/means through which we receive the obedience of Jesus Christ. His righteousness is counted as our own righteousness—just as if a poor woman that marries a rich man is then counted as rich herself. Through their union, his riches become her riches. The church is the bride of Christ and we are counted as righteous by our “marriage” to Jesus. In Jesus, all the unfathomable riches of Christ are ours (Eph 3:8, Rom 10:12). We merit eternal life by being perfect as the law demands. But our perfect obedience comes from outside of us—“from God on the basis of faith” (Phil 3:9).

He affirms we are justified by faith, but denies it is by faith alone. So Abraham was justified by faith (Rom 4:1-5). Yet somehow he’s not fully justified because he has to do works too then? Since Mr. Thrasher incorrectly thinks that James 2 teaches the same justification Paul is referring to in Romans 4, then that means Abraham wasn’t actually justified for many years after believing God (contradicting Rom 4:1-5). Mr. Thrasher thinks Abraham wasn’t justified until he offered Isaac more than a decade after the justification described in Romans 4. This is utterly incoherent! How

is Abraham justified by believing God if he isn't justified until offering Isaac years later? Mr. Thrasher's teaching makes no sense! You can't be justified twice. You cannot be re-justified after previously being justified. You can't be partially justified. James is so clearly speaking of vindication because we know for a fact that Abraham is justified by faith alone as proven by Paul in Romans 4.

Mr. Thrasher teaches justification by faith plus works. He believes our sins are not forgiven unless we are baptized. He takes the Roman Catholic interpretation of James, which is blatantly false. And perhaps worst of all, he adopts the Roman Catholic concept that we are justified only in so far as we are sanctified.

Having our sins forgiven gets us to the moral equivalence of a rock—neither righteous nor sinful. Therefore a positive righteousness must be supplied along with forgiveness. That either comes from us keeping the law in its totality (Gal 5) or it comes from the righteousness of Christ being counted to us through faith (Phil 3:2-9). Christ's death takes away our sin but it is His life that provides the righteousness. Mr. Thrasher would have you to believe that your faith itself is a work, and your obedience to God's law (such as baptism) must be added in order for you to be saved. That is salvation by works. This is not the biblical gospel of salvation by grace. "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Rom 11:6). Beware, dear reader, Mr. Thrasher's teaching will not save you; it is a mutant gospel message.

He is the clear and simple gospel message of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone...

Ephesians 2:8-9 ***For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.***

Galatians 2:16 nevertheless knowing that a *man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus*, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, *so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.*

Galatians 3:11 Now that *no one is justified by the Law before God* is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL *LIVE BY FAITH.*”

Titus 3:5 He saved us, *not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy.*

It doesn't have to say the words “by faith alone” because it is teaching we are saved on the basis of faith and **NOT** on the basis of good deeds/works (obedience), **NOT** by the law—that's what we mean by saying “faith alone.” Paul sets works/obedience in direct contrast to faith. Mr. Thrasher has repeatedly said we are justified by faith, but also works. He could not be more explicit in denying biblical teaching. Every one of the many times Scripture tells us we are justified by faith (without it adding anything else), Mr. Thrasher must say those statements are incomplete at best. I simply believe them for what they clearly teach.

Mr. Thrasher claims that justification by faith alone “restricts justification by faith to the simple trust in Jesus as Savior.” **That is exactly right.** If you trust in Jesus you will be saved! Paul literally makes it just that simple when evangelizing the jailer in Philippi—“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). I can say that same thing in complete honesty. Mr. Thrasher however has added to the simple gospel, much like the Galatian heretics that Paul anathematizes. He has claimed you must be baptized and do good works before you are saved. He has contaminated the gospel of grace with our filthy rags of righteousness (Isaiah 64:6). He has taken the good things that salvation produces in us and turned

them into meritorious acts we perform in order to be saved. He refuses to call it meritorious, but that does not change the fact that that is what he is teaching. For Mr. Thrasher, only if you do the acts of righteousness will you be saved. But for Paul, it is not the one who works, but instead the one who simply believes who is justified (Rom 4:5).

Such shocking contradictions to Paul's teaching of justification are found almost exclusively among the Roman Catholic Church and other false sects. Their gospel is blatantly false for the exact same reason the Galatian heretics' gospel is false, which just so happens to be the exact same reason Mr. Thrasher's gospel is false.

I will close by stating one thing Mr. Thrasher and I do indeed agree on: if you have faith in Christ, you should get baptized. This is an act for Christians to do in obedience. However, I will not add to the true gospel by claiming that obedience justifies us or gets us forgiven. All of salvation is all of God. Jesus saves by His work and His work only. This is the very definition of salvation by grace.

THRASHER'S THIRD NEGATIVE

I appreciate Mr. Guingrich's courage as demonstrated by his willingness to participate in this discussion of what he and I both believe is a vitally important (and controversial) topic. I have encountered few Baptist preachers (or representatives of other churches) in recent years who are willing to participate in formal debate.

Traever thinks that I believe faith plus works are required for forgiveness. I accept that characterization, if by "works" he means **obeying God's commands** (*James 2:24; Matthew 16:27; Hebrews 5:9*).

Traever claims, "He [Mr. Thrasher] quotes verses in his defense that come from passages that contradict the very point he is making." I deny that any passage "contradicts" my position in this debate. He says, "In John 6:29 Jesus tells His listeners that it is **God's** work that we believe God works faith in us; it is a gift we receive" (page 95). The fact that believing is "the work of God" does not mean that He forces faith on anyone. Consider the following translations:

"Jesus answered, 'God wants you to have faith in the one he sent.'"²¹

"Jesus answered, 'The work God wants you to do is this: Believe the One he sent.'"²²

²¹ *Contemporary English Version*

²² *New Century Version*

“This is the work God wants of you,” replied Jesus, “that you believe in the one he sent.”²³

Note that it is the **individual** who chooses to believe, which is consistent with *Romans 10:17*, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Furthermore, the context shows that Jesus’ statement is His response to a question: “What shall **we do**, that **we may work** the works of God?”

My friend says that I cited “John 12:42 which speaks of rulers that believed in Jesus but did not confess him. ... Obviously saving faith includes **trusting in** Christ.” I agree, but I would add that **saving faith includes obedience** to Christ (*Hebrews 5:9; James 2:24; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8*). In this third passage Paul wrote, “When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking **vengeance** on those who do not know God, and **on those who do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ.” If we are to avoid receiving the vengeance of God, we must “**obey the gospel**”! Of course, that **obedience includes being baptized** (*Acts 2:38; 10:48; 18:8; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27*; etc.)!

Traever further explains his position: “The faith of believers ... includes trusting Jesus to save them. That is the faith that alone justifies.” I again agree with this statement with the clarification from the previously cited case of the Philippian jailer, about whom Luke writes, “He rejoiced, **having believed** in God with all his household.” This observation is made **after** the jailer’s faith led him to **be baptized** (*Acts 16:32-34*)—**his faith included obedience in baptism!**

Mr. Guingrich seeks to nullify my response to his argument on the “thief on the cross” by contending that “baptism had **already**

²³ *New Testament For Everyone*

been instituted for believers prior to Christ's crucifixion." Not the baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" (*Acts 2:38*)! The baptism administered by John the Baptist was **not** the baptism of the New Covenant (*Acts 19:1-5*). My opponent cannot claim **that** baptism, because it was **unto remission of sins** (*Mark 1:4*, ASV). However, he refused to answer my question #6: "Is it possible that 'thief on the cross' had been among the multitudes who went out to be baptized by John (*Matthew 3:5-6*), perhaps before he became a 'thief'?" He is totally **incapable of proving his claim** that the "thief" was **not baptized!**" I asked several times, without response from my opponent, for his scriptural proof that "the thief" was never baptized!

Traever advances the same basic argument concerning "the sinful woman" forgiven by Jesus in *Luke 7:37-50*, whom Traever asserts "is yet another instance where there is clear forgiveness of sins and salvation through faith alone." He completely ignored my point from *Hebrews 9:16-17* in which the inspired writer argued, "For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives." The New Testament of Jesus Christ did not come into force until **after** Jesus' death. Therefore, during His earthly ministry He forgave the sins of some people (e.g., the "thief on the cross" and "the sinful woman") on different conditions than those specified in Jesus' New Covenant (e.g., *Acts 2:38*; *22:16*; *Mark 16:16*; *Romans 6:3-4*; and other passages I have cited).

Traever says, "The Trinity and transubstantiation ... were not brought up to discuss them as separate topics. ...Mr. Thrasher has demanded that baptism be referred to as a sign using the literal word ... However, he is willing to affirm the Trinity without the

literal word being used ... baptism does not need to be called a “sign” for the Bible to teach that ... (same goes for the Lord’s Supper).” I have had about 20 debates with Oneness Pentecostal preachers on the topic Traever calls the “Trinity”; however, not one of them used that word in the proposition, because some things taught by people regarding the “Trinity” are not found in the Bible. Nevertheless, that there are three divine persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in the Godhead is clearly taught in the Bible.

Traever says, “Mr. Thrasher cites passages regarding judgment according to our works. He is confusedly collapsing two different ideas. We get rewarded according to our works (Matt 10:42, Luke 19:17, 2 Tim 4:7-8) when we are before the judgment seat of God (2 Cor 5:10, Rom 14:10). But that is not how we are saved.” Let me respond by citing the Lord’s description of the Judgment in *Matthew 25:31-46*. The Lord explained, “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: **FOR** I was hungry and **you gave** Me food; I was thirsty and **you gave** Me drink; I was a stranger and **you took** Me in; I was naked and **you clothed** Me; I was sick and **you visited** Me; I was in prison and **you came** to Me.’” Note that Jesus stated the reasons that these people would go to Heaven. Their **good works**, while **not earning or deserving salvation**, were said by Jesus to result in their eternal inheritance (cf. *Hebrews 5:9*). Further, when the Lord addressed those on the left hand, He said, “‘Depart from Me, you cursed, **into the everlasting fire** prepared for the devil and his angels: **FOR** ...” Again, He gave reasons why these people were told to **depart into everlasting fire**. The Lord’s judgment, as is so often stated, will be according to our works! Traever has contended that “works” have nothing to do with our eternal destiny, but he is wrong! **Jesus tells us that!**

The word “for” (Greek: γαρ = *gar*) introducing verses 35 and 42 is “a causal postpositive ... conjunction, *for*, introducing a reason for the thing previously said ...”²⁴ Thayer’s *Lexicon* explains, “It adduces the Cause or gives the Reason of a preceding statement or opinion.”²⁵ What is the **reason** or the **cause** for those on the right hand on the Judgment Day being granted the eternal inheritance? Jesus says it is “**for**” their doing specified good works. Why were those on the left hand told by Jesus to depart into everlasting fire? Jesus says it is “for” not doing the same good works. That certainly sounds like our “works” are involved in our eternal salvation! (Remember *Hebrews 5:9*—Jesus “became the author of **eternal salvation** to all who **obey Him**”!)

Traever injects another misrepresentation of my position when he writes that I need to “abandon his own works as being capable of justifying him.” I do not view my obedience to God’s commands as “capable” of “justifying” me. **God justifies WHEN I obey Him!** I gave Bible illustrations (Naaman in *2 Kings 5* and the conquest of Jericho in *Joshua 6*) to emphasize this idea.

Traever claims, “Mr. Thrasher errs greatly when he implies imputed righteousness is exclusive to the Reformed faith.” His accusation is, to use his words, “blatantly false”! I did not **say** or **imply** that “imputed righteousness is exclusive to the Reformed faith.” I taught that the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ is **contrary to the Bible**.

Traever said that I quoted *Romans 10:9-10*, but that I “**cannot affirm this passage!**” He claims that “Paul promises salvation

²⁴ *A New Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament* by George Ricker Berry. Chicago: Wilcox & Follett Company, 1952, p. 21.

²⁵ *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Joseph Henry Thayer. Grand Rapids, MI, 1967, p. 109.

without baptism.” Traever’s assumption is that because **baptism** is not expressly mentioned in that passage, baptism is excluded! However, **this text** also does not expressly mention **repentance**! But we know that repentance is required from other passages (e.g., *Acts 17:30; 2:38; 2 Peter 3:6; Luke 13:3, 5*). Similarly, we know that **baptism** is necessary for receiving God’s forgiveness (*Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27*; etc.). No single verse lists **everything** involved in our being saved; but we should accept **all** that the Bible says (*Revelation 22:18-19*).

Traever contends, “Hebrews 5:9 and Matthew 7:21 are both cited by Mr. Thrasher as evidence that works justify. But neither one says we obey to get saved.” Let me again quote those verses. *Hebrews 5:9*, “[Jesus]... became the author of eternal salvation to **all who obey Him**.” *Matthew 7:21*, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will** of My Father in heaven.” According to our Lord, one must do the Father’s will to enter the kingdom of heaven. That would include **God’s command to be baptized** (*Acts 10:48*)!

Mr. Guingrich commented on my remarks concerning *Mark 16:16*, calling them “pointless.” He adds, “Besides, all his grammatical arguments simply reinforce my original point about *Romans 5:1* proving justification by faith alone, where the grammatical argument does actually apply.” *Romans 5:1* reads: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I fully accept what this verse says! However, this text does **not** say “faith **alone**,” as Traever asserted. It also says that peace with God is “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Since “peace with God” is a **spiritual blessing**, and **all spiritual blessings are “in Christ”** (*Ephesians 1:3*), then, as I have previously argued, believers must have been **baptized** to be **in Christ** where

those blessings are received (*Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4*)! Instead of supporting Traever's proposition, *Romans 5:1* supports mine!

Traever writes, "I've very intentionally not spent time discussing the originality of Mark 16:9-20 because it is so far from the point of this book." The truth is that he introduced this argument, but he fails to provide **any proof** of his claim. He simply dismisses *Mark 16:9-20*, claiming it is not part of the original writer's text. That really evades the point! I am not particularly concerned with the **identification of the original writer** (whether Mark or some other inspired writer). In fact, there is no statement in the book itself, or elsewhere in Scripture, naming the inspired author of this book (or several other books, e.g., Hebrews). If God wanted us to know for certain who penned the book commonly designated "Mark," He could have plainly told us, as He did several other NT books. Since He didn't tell us, I conclude that we don't have to know that, including the unnamed penman of *Mark 16:9-20*.

Briefly, addressing Traever's rejection of *Mark 16:9-20* as genuine Scripture, there are several strong arguments for accepting this passage, whether it was penned by Mark or some other inspired writer.

- Several of the early "**Church Fathers**" (including Papias, Justin Martyr, Vincentius, Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Marinus, and Eusebius) quoted from this passage as genuine Scripture prior to the dating assumed for Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, considered by many as the two oldest extant Greek manuscripts, and texts that are often (mis)used by proponents of Traever's conclusion (rejecting *Mark 16:9-20*).

- Early **Versions** (written in languages other than Greek) before the time of Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus include the disputed text (*Mark 16:9-20*), including the Peshito, the Curetonian Syriac, and the Vetus Itala. Furthermore, the existence of such versions implies the *even earlier existence* of Greek manuscripts from which those versions were translated!
- The **overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts** contain *Mark 16:9-20*. The rejection of this evidence from many hundreds of Greek manuscripts to give “veto power” to the (supposedly) “two earliest manuscripts” that do not contain this passage is unreasonable and faulty. I will not have space to discuss faults of these “two oldest manuscripts,” but there are good reasons for not ceding “veto power” on *Mark 16:9-20* to Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Incidentally, I checked more than 50 English translations of the NT, and every one of them contained *Mark 16:9-20*!

John Burgon, referenced in my Second Negative, observed: “With the exception of [Vaticanus and Sinaiticus] ... there is not one Codex in existence, uncial or cursive, ... which leaves out the last twelve verses of S. Mark.”²⁶ Despite this evidence, some preachers (such as Baptist preacher L. S. Ballard, more than 70 years ago, and my friend Traever Guingrich in this debate) are so opposed to the statement of the Lord in *Mark 16:16* that they are willing to dismiss a passage of inspired Scripture in order to avoid advocating the truth that “He who believes **and is baptized** will be saved”!

²⁶ John William Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*. Oxford and London: James Parker and Co., 1871, p. 92. Accessible: [The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark \(gutenberg.org\)](http://www.gutenberg.org).

My friend states: “No one is saved **without** good works, but no one is saved **BY** their good works.” James wrote by inspiration, “You see then that a man is justified **by** works, and not **by** faith only” (*James 2:24*). Other English translations say the same thing. “Ye see that **by works a man is justified**, and **not only by faith**.”²⁷ “You see that a person is justified **by** works and **not by** faith alone.”²⁸ “You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.”²⁹ On the basis of what James wrote to those in his audience, they ought to “see” his point! Unfortunately, my friend Traever does **not “see”** because his theological bias hinders his seeing the Truth that James declares.

Mr. Guingrich illustrates his position on works using “an apple tree.” He asks, “Does an apple tree have to bear apples in order to be an apple tree?” Then he answered his own question, “No, of course not.” However, his illustration actually **contradicts** his position! By way of application Traever says, “As a **result** [of being saved], we bear the fruit of good works. ... all saved people bear good fruit ... Bearing fruit is a necessary result of being saved.” However, using Traever’s illustration of an apple tree, I observe that actually **not all apples trees bear apples**, just as not all fig trees bear figs (*Mark 11:9-14*) and not all vines bear fruit (*John 15:2*). Yet, Traever thinks that **all saved people will bear fruit**. However, that is not consistent with his illustration!

Traever refers to *Titus 3:5*, but he quotes only part of the context. Paul wrote, “But when the **kindness and the love of God our Savior** toward man appeared, **not by works of righteousness which we have done**, but according to His mercy **He saved** us,

²⁷ *American Standard Version*

²⁸ *English Standard Version*

²⁹ *New American Standard Bible*

through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (*Titus 3:4-5*). Traever contends that this refers to all works, even including **obedience** to God’s commands. While it is certainly true that what we do **does not merit**, earn, or deserve God’s kindness and love (we need His **mercy** in order to be saved), it is also true that we receive His blessings **when we obey Him** (*Hebrews 5:9*; cf. *2 Kings 5* [Naaman’s cleansing from leprosy]; *Joshua 6* [Israel’s conquest of Jericho]). These Bible statements have been discussed several times. **When** do we receive God’s blessings? When we **obey Him!** That obedience includes our being **baptized** for (unto) forgiveness of sins (*Acts 2:38; 22:16*; etc.).

Traever declares, “If you trust in Jesus you will be saved! Paul literally makes it just that simple when evangelizing the jailer in Philippi—‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved’ (*Acts 16:31*).” He was clearly told that he had to “believe” to be saved, but he was **not** told “**only** believe” or have “faith **alone**”! That is my opponent’s **addition** to the text! Once more, he has ignored the context which says that **after** he and his household were baptized, they were still believers ... **obedient believers** (*verse 34*)!

Traever closes his final affirmative by saying, “If you have faith in Christ, you should get baptized. This is an act for Christians to do in obedience.” However, despite his claim that baptism “is an act for **Christians to do** in obedience,” God’s word does not teach that! In order to emphasize what I’ve indicated throughout this debate, I want to remind Traever and our audience of several NT passages on baptism. As you read these again, please note that not even one of them teaches that baptism is received by those who are **already Christians**. Furthermore, not one teaches that baptism is “**a sign that a person is already forgiven**”! They all support the view that I have affirmed in this debate—that obedience in baptism is a

condition for being saved (forgiven) by God. The act of baptism does not forgive sins; **God does that *when*** we obey Him. Please give serious and prayerful consideration to these Bible verses!

Mark 16:16, “**He who believes and is baptized will be saved ...**”

Acts 2:38, “... Repent, and **let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ...**”

Acts 22:16, “And now why are you waiting? **Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord**”

Romans 6:3-4, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?** Therefore we were **buried with Him through baptism into death**, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”

Galatians 3:27, “For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ”

Note: Remember that Paul wrote, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with **every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly *places in Christ*” [But we get “in Christ” **when** we are “**baptized into Christ**”!]

Colossians 2:11-13, “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by **putting off the body of the sins of the flesh**, by the circumcision of Christ, **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He

has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses”

1 Peter 3:21, “There is also an antitype **which now saves us—baptism** (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” [Note that Peter did not say baptism is a “figure” or “sign” that one is already saved, but an “antitype”! The “type” (“figure”) was Noah’s being “saved through water” (the flood).

The issue in this debate is not **WHO** saves—clearly, that is God, who wants all men to be saved (*1 Timothy 2:3-4*)!

The issue is not **WHAT** saves—the **blood of Jesus Christ** saves (*1 John 1:7*)!

The issue is not **whether or not FAITH SAVES**, that is, is faith a condition for being forgiven?—Faith uncontrovertibly is required for one to be forgiven (*John 8:24*). However, forgiveness is **not** by FAITH ONLY (*James 2:24*). The NT tells us that **more** than faith only is required. God also requires **repentance** (*Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9*), **confession** of Jesus (*Romans 10:9-10*), and **baptism** (*Acts 2:38; 22:16*). He requires **obedience** to His commands (*Hebrews 5:9*).

I encourage all who read this discussion between Mr. Guingrich and me to submit to the terms on which God has promised forgiveness, not to **deserve** forgiveness, but to **accept** God’s offer of forgiveness **through His grace** and the precious **blood of His Son Jesus Christ** by gladly meeting the conditions He has established. We have the wonderful example of 3000 lost souls on Pentecost: “Then they that **gladly received his word were baptized**: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (*Acts 2:41*) Why not follow their examples while you have the opportunity?

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